

SHUDRAKA

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three soothsayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

Makers of Indian Literature

SHUDRAKA

BISWANATH BANERJEE



Sahitya Akademi

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PREFATORY NOTE

In the following pages an effort has been made to assess the contribution of Shudraka to Sanskrit literature, to estimate his excellence as a dramatist, to evaluate his position in the world of literature, and to project his mind and thought. As the author of a dramatic composition of the *prakarana*-type Shudraka has earned eternal fame by virtue of his intelligent and capable handling of a common story on love-theme. He has exhibited his original ideas in the composition of a Sanskrit drama and has gone out of the beaten track in his approach. His dramatic skill is such that a ten-act composition with a host of characters never appear boring or uninteresting even to a general reader. A keen observer of men and matter, a cultured mind with remarkable ingenuity Shudraka has put in all his skill and talents in the creation of a toy-cart of clay which will never perish! We have impressive dramatic compositions from Bhasa, Kalidasa or even from Bhavabhuti, but it will not perhaps be an exaggeration to say that Shudraka's work is the *one* in the firmament of Sanskrit dramatic literature which can claim to be a real drama, a drama of life, a drama for the people. His created characters appear to be in flesh and blood, they are so lively and cosmopolitan in nature. Whether it is in the treatment of his story-material, or in his idea of the stage, in his scenic arrangements and even in the use of languages for his characters, — in every sphere of the composition, Shudraka has shown his novelty and originality.

Shudraka's use of the various types of Prakrits and their varieties is a unique feature. We do not know of any extant Sanskrit Play exhibiting 'like the variety of Prakrits found' in Shudraka's composition 'which seems almost as if intended to illustrate the precepts of the *Natyashastra* in this regard.' The multifarious kinds of Prakrit and the subtle speeches couched in an inimitable Prakrit appear to have offered different shades of meanings and must have been understood and appreciated by the general audience for whom the drama was intended. Shudraka's wealth of the Prakrits and his use of a number of unfamiliar local words supposed to be of indigenous origin are perhaps a good sign of the

popularity of Shudraka's drama. There must have been a good tradition of Prakrits among the people which was subsequently lost. We have in the drama such words and observations in Prakrit which express the intended ideas not only forcefully but also attractively. If these words or expressions are not read in their original forms none can really relish the charms or excellence of the same. The usual practice in our teaching of a drama in colleges and universities is to avoid the Prakrit portions and read instead their Sanskrit renderings (*chhaya*). It will really be an unfortunate case if this practice is followed in reading Shudraka's composition. To read his Prakrit passages in Sanskrit *chhaya* is to deny oneself the correct spirit and a real relish of the excellence of such passages! Generally most of the teachers do not possess the knowledge of the Prakrits properly nor are the students ready to accept the treatment of such passages in originals. They do not know what they are missing! In addition to this loss of Prakrit tradition a really good edition of the text of Shudraka's drama is wanting. It is a long desideratum to have a standard edition of the text incorporating all possible variant readings to allow the readers to choose the readings themselves for a correct interpretation.

We possess a good number of writings on Shudraka and his drama in various languages of the world and in the study on Shudraka they are of immense value. Professor S. R. Banerjee has given us a detailed Bibliography on the subject in his edition of Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya's *Mricchakatika*, a study. In the present study I have been benefited by the works of predecessors in the field and I express my indebtedness to them.

I am grateful to the Sahitya Akademi for kindly asking me to prepare the study for inclusion in the Makers of Indian Literature series. My thanks are due to Professor I. N. Chaudhuri, the Secretary, and Dr. R. K. Saha, the Deputy Secretary of the Akademi in this connection. Professor Alakananda Bandyopadhyay of the Visva Bharati and Dr. Bhabashankar Mukherjee of Sabang College, Midnapore, have helped me much in the preparation of the study and I offer my sincere thanks to them. But for the regular ungrudging assistance of my wife Smt. Gita Banerjee, my daughter Smt. Susmita Chatterjee, my son Shri Supratim Banerjee and my son-in-law Somen Ranjan Chatterjee it would have been a more difficult task for me to complete the present work within the stipulated time.

1

SHUDRAKA IDENTITY AND DATE

King Shudraka is one of the few masters among Sanskrit Playwrights who has earned high appreciations from critics all over the academic world. The *Mricchakatikam*, the Little Clay Cart, has been traditionally handed down to us as his only work which by virtue of its exceptional dramatic qualities has brought him a rare distinctiveness among Sanskrit dramatists. Unfortunately, however, Shudraka's identity, his personal history, and the time in which he flourished are all shrouded in such a mystery and complexity that most divergent views have gathered round these issues, and Shudraka has often been considered as a mythical figure¹.

It is well known a fact that chronology in early Sanskrit literature, excepting perhaps a few cases like that of Banabhatta or Bhavabhuti is a regrettably unsettled matter. Ancient Sanskrit authors have remained so much silent about anything personal that we are confronted with insurmountable difficulties in fixing up the dates of the *greats* like Bhasa or Kalidasa, or even in finding the areas to which they belonged! Quite in conformity with this trend in early Sanskrit literature we have but very little confirmed evidence about Shudraka in his work. It is not that the author of the *Mricchakatika* does not inform us of anything about his personality or achievements, but the information furnished here make our task more difficult to offer any solution to the problem!

In the Prologue to the drama it is stated that the play has been written by a brave and handsome *kshatriya* king named Shudraka. We are told of his various qualities and achievements². Well versed in the

1. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama*, pp. 128 ff

2. Prologue to the drama, verses 3-5

shastras he has been said to be a devotee of Lord Shiva through whose grace he has got his lost eyesight restored. He is said to have performed a horse-sacrifice (*ashwamedha*), and having anointed his son on the throne he has laid down his life by entering into the fire at the age of one hundred years and ten days. It is curious to note that the author refers to his own work in the perfect tense and with the indeclinable *kila* : *cakara sarvam kila sudrako nripah*—King Shudraka delineated all (this),—and writes about his own death, : *shudrako 'gnim pravisthah'*—Shudraka entered the fire³. It has often been stressed that the Prologue must have been an interpolation, otherwise how could the author write about himself and his death in this way! To solve this problem of the author referring to himself in the way it has been done in the Prologue, it may be suggested that as an expert in Astronomy and Mathematics the author knew about the exact span of his life by astrological computations and referred to his literary and other achievements together with the incident of self-immolation as past events in anticipation of the *sutradhara*'s alluding to it at a later time⁴. Prithvidhara, an important commentator on the text, has observed on this point that Shudraka came to know about the facts with the help of astro-mathematical texts like *Jataka* etc⁵. We can not ignore the fact that all the manuscripts of the text have the same accounts in the prologue and the data available on Shudraka in the *Avanti sundarikatha* of Dandin do not generally disagree with the account of Shudraka as in the prologue to the *Mricchakatika*. As this account has a long tradition and as it has not been contradicted by any ancient authority, it is difficult to discard it by simply labelling it as an interpolation written by a later personality.

The question of interpolation raises also an important point as to how could the person who supposedly wrote the prologue find any interest in deliberately associating king Shudraka with this composition. It could be possible that a court-poet of king Shudraka wrote the play for his royal patron and allowed his own name to pass into oblivion. Another possibility is that an unknown poet of the name of Shudraka wrote the drama and later on became identified with the better known name of king Shudraka. Even if the prologue is taken to

3. *Op. cit.*

4. R.D. Karmarkar, Edition, p. 347

5. Cf. Prithvidhara's commentary on the relevant line in Act I : *jatakadi ganitadvara jnatvu*—having known through mathematical texts like *Jataka* etc.

be an interpolation, the account contained in it should not be considered as wholly untrustworthy. Whoever be the person causing the interpolation, he does not seem to be one separated from the main writer by a wide margin of time. The style, diction and the spirit dominating the prologue fit in admirably with the drama proper, and even the element of humour for which the play is so widely appreciated, is easily perceptible in the prologue itself! So many myths and legends have been woven round the name of Shudraka, and so many theories have been forwarded on the identity of Shudraka that it becomes a difficult task to recoil any truth from them and establish the identity and personality of king Shudraka and the author of the play.

From some references in the text itself it seems reasonable to take the dramatist as a southerner. There are good evidences in the play to substantiate this proposition. The military officer, Chandanaka, stages a quarrel in Act VI as is usually done in the country of Karnata⁶ and referring to several peoples of the South he calls himself a southerner⁷. The *chandalas* in Act X pray to their patron-goddess Durga as a dweller of the Sahya-mountain⁸ which is known as the northern parts of the Western Ghats, i.e., in the Deccan. Peculiarities of the *prakrits* and the author's preference for them also indicate the possibility of the southern origin for the dramatist.

In ancient and medieval Sanskrit compositions we find references to Shudraka, a royal-poet, and there are traces of appellation of Shudraka as a surname of many kings of North and South India, but to ascertain whether any historical personality of the name of Shudraka wrote the drama, or the Shudraka with whom the *Mricchakatika* has come to be associated as the author is a mythical figure, we have to ransack ancient history, tradition and literature, and carefully examine all the Shudrakas whose existence is recorded.

It is perhaps certain that the name Shudraka had acquired so much celebrity and popularity that his name passed into well known Sanskrit works as a brilliant personality. We may refer to some of these cases in important classical Sanskrit compositions.

Banabhatta in his *Kadambari* writes about a Shudraka as the king of Vidisa and also refers to a king Shudraka in his *Harshacharita* as well. Bana describes him with much glow and has almost deified him

6. Act VI. 20. 18

7. *Op. cit.*

8. Act X. 37.1

with fanciful similes. It is possible that Shudraka as a mighty monarch was already a renowned figure and illumined the imagination of the poet. Kalhana in his *Rajatarangini* speaks about a king Shudraka who with his prowess and firmness could be set beside the great Vikramaditya! The *Brihat-katha-manjari* refers to a king Shudraka whose kingdom was at Vidisa. We have a king Shudraka in the *Vetala-panchavimshati* who lived for one hundred years with his capital at Vardhamana or Shobhavati. The *Kathasaritsagara* tells us a story about a king Shudraka who was saved from his imminent death by a loyal servant who sacrificed his own life to the deity after praying for a longevity of one hundred years for his king. In none of these references, however, we get any clue to ascertain the identity of king Shudraka as the author of the *Mricchakatika*. It seems the name of Shudraka as a royal-poet had been invested with 'traditional dignity' and also caused the name to be used as a 'hereditary appellation to later royal dynasties such as the Ganga and the Pallava....'⁹.

In the introduction to the edition of the *Caturbhani* the editors have expressed the opinion that the writer of the *bhana* entitled *Padmaprabhritaka* is identical with the author of the *Mricchakatika*, and compositions like *Balacharita*, *Avimaraka* and *Vatsarajacharita* have also been attributed to him. A verse at the end of the *Padmaprabhritaka* says that a *bhana* could only be composed by Vararuci, Ishvaradatta, Shyamilaka and Shudraka, and even Kalidasa suffered from limitations in this field of literature! A drama entitled *Vinavasavadatta* based on Udayana legends is also attributed to him, but this is perhaps the same as the *Vatsarajacharita* having a second title.¹⁰ Anantakavi of the twelfth century A.D. in his heroic poem *viracharita* in thirty chapters narrates the exploits of Shalivahana, the conqueror of Vikramaditya of Ujjayini, and we find here Shudraka as a friend and co-regent of Shalivahana. Kshirasvamin in his commentary to the *Amarakosha* mentions one king Shudraka among the famous *charavartins* of ancient India along with Vikramaditya, Sahasanka, Hala and Satavahana. Rajashekhara informs us of a king Shudraka as a great patron of learning along with Vasudeva and Satavahana.¹¹ These information or references are also of no help to us in determining the authorship of the *Mricchakatika* or the identity of Shudraka!

9. M. Krishnamacariar, *History of Classical Sanskrit Literature* p. 572

10. *Op. cit.* p. 578

11. C.C. Dalal (Edn) *Kavyamimamsa*, p. 55

Dandin in his *Dashakumaracharita* describes the exploits of a king Shudraka in various lives. the *Dashakumaracharita* and the *Mricchakatika* show some striking resemblances in thoughts and expressions, and we find some common expressions in the *kavyadarsha* and the drama. Dandin's society in the prose romance strongly resembles the one reflected in the drama, and like the author of the drama Dandin was also a southerner. In addition to all this the occurrence of the verse *limpativa tamo'ngani...* in both these works has been noted by critics as significant for our purpose. A scholar like Pischel was prompted by these facts to formulate the theory that Dandin was the author of the *Mricchakatika*. He considered the drama as the third work of Dandin to substantiate the observation of Rajashekhara : three compositions of Dandin are well known in the three worlds¹²,—the other two being the *Dashakumaracharita* and the *Kavyadarsha*.

The arguments on the basis of which Dandin is identified with the author of the drama do not seem to be much convincing. Resemblances in the description of societies as reflected in any two literary works can not necessarily establish a common authorship of the works concerned. The verse *limpativa etc.*, has since been found also in the *Balacharita* and the *Charudatta* of Bhasa. This verse in question appears to have been a sort of floating *subhashita* in ancient India serving as a common source to many authors. Pischel's idea about Rajashekhara's observation picking up the drama as the third work of Dandin is misleading in the opinion of P.V. Kane : 'All that verse means is that three compositions of Dandin are well known in all the worlds and not that Dandin wrote only three works'.¹³ It should be considered also if compositions having similar incidents or dramatic device should indicate a common authorship. the last scene in the *Mudrarakshasa* resembles very much the last Act in the *Mricchakatika* in spirit, in sentiment, or even in the setting itself, but a common authorship of the two is inconceivable! The scenes of violence on the stage, the description of a condemned criminal, elaborate stage directions and the state of society as reflected in our drama can well be found in Harsha's *Nagananda*!

Vamana in his work on Poetics mentions Shudraka by name: a large number of the variety (*slesha-guna*) is found in the compositions of

12. See Peterson, *Sarngadharapaddhati*, 174

13. P.V Kane, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, pp. 93-94

Shudraka and others.¹⁴ Vamana also quotes a line : *dyutam hi nama purusasya asimhasanam rajyam*,—to a man gambling is just a kingdom without a throne,¹⁵—which can be found only in this drama.¹⁶ The verse quoted by Vamana in the same text under V. 3 is found in both the *Charudatta* (I. 2) of Bhasa and the *Mricchakatika* (I. 9) with a change in both cases. This makes it clear that Vamana in about the eighth century A.D. knew Shudraka as the author of this drama. It is, however, a fact that Shudraka has not been mentioned as the author of the drama by any poetician prior to Vamana. This is also a fact that in the references by Vamana we do not have any indication about the time and identity of Shudraka, a royal-dramatist. In the *Suktimuktavali* we have a verse in which Ramila and Somila are mentioned as the joint authors of an account on Shudraka.¹⁷ It has been assumed that Ramila and Somila were the court-poets of king Shudraka.¹⁸ Kalidasa mentions one Saumillaka with appreciation along with Bhasa, and Saumillaka was possibly identical with Somila. In point of style, diction, language, features in the setting of the scenes as also the reflected social conditions the drama may indicate a date anterior to Kalidasa. It is, however, confusing for us to note that Kalidasa has nowhere made any reference to such an attractive play or to its author who must have been a colourful personality! In this connection we may take into account the fact that Kalidasa is also silent about Asvaghosha who must have been his predecessor.

All these references culled from different sources in Sanskrit literature also do not give us any clue to the solution of our problem in respect of the identity and date of the author of the *Mricchakatika*. It is only possible to assume that already about the seventh century A.D. there was a king in India well known as Shudraka and a number of literary treatises were composed on him. The personality and achievements of Shudraka must have been a source of inspiration to ancient Indian writers who had remembered him with all appreciation but without any historical data. The name of Shudraka and accounts on him appearing at different times in different places of Sanskrit literature have in course of time been covered with myths and legends,

14. N. Kulkarni (Edn) - *Kavyalankarasutravritti*, p. 41

15. *ibid*, p.73

16. *Mricchakatika* II 6. 66

17. *Suktimuktavali*, 49

18. Bhide (Edn), *Svapnavasavadatta*, Intro. p. 35

it is nevertheless difficult to ignore the fact that a personality and for that matter a king Shudraka was very much in existence in flesh and blood! One who attracted the attention of a number of celebrities and was held in high esteem and admiration over centuries could not possibly be just a myth!

The discovery of the *Daridra-Charudatta* ascribed to Bhasa has brought some fresh light on the problem of Shudraka. With various conceptual and verbal similarities the play of Bhasa is so closely connected with the work of Shudraka that the issue tends to become somewhat complicated! It is a rare phenomenon in the history of Sanskrit literature that two plays correspond to each other in this way, and we may perhaps rule out the possibility of their independent origin.

Bhasa's play has brought to fore a suggestion if Bhasa could be considered as the author of the *Mricchakatika* as well! In regard to the relationship between Bhasa's *Charudatta* and *Shudraka's Mricchakatika* critics are sharply divided in their opinion.¹⁹ Whether the *Charudatta* is an abridgement of the *Mricchakatika*, or the latter is an enlargement of the former, or the *Charudatta* is an earlier version forming the basis of Shudraka's play, is still a vexed problem to be solved convincingly!

Regarding Bhasa's supposed authorship of the *Mricchakatika* we may reasonably question ourselves why among the thirteen plays ascribed to him Bhasa did single out the *Mricchakatika* only to be known as the work of one Shudraka, a supposedly mythical personality! There is no decisive evidence in any of the two compositions in favour of a definite ascription or even to suggest a definite date for either of them. It has to be considered also that the author of the *Mricchakatika* has been said to be a king which Bhasa definitely was not.

The other alternative proposition of the two works being different recensions of an original one seems to have been justifiably exploded by Pusalker.²⁰ From the citations made by Vamana, as noted above,²¹ and Sagarandin in his *Natakalakshana-ratnakosha*²² it may be understood that the two rhetoricians distinguished between the works of Bhasa and Shudraka.

Available in fragment the work of Bhasa contains passages²³ indicative of some actions to be resorted to in future which may

19. eg. A. D. Pusalker—Bhasa—A Study, pp. 155-178

20. *op. cit.*

21. See supra

22. Cf. Pusalker as above

23. *ibid.* p. 158

convince us that Bhasa did not want to make his play end abruptly, but did continue with some more scenes beyond the extent of the play now available. It is also to be noted that the *Charudatta* does not end with the usual *Epilogue* or the actors' benedictory stanza, a *Bharata-vakya*. All these facts may lead us to believe that the *Charudatta* was a complete work with some more acts, and that the work of both Bhasa and Shudraka possibly developed to the end on similar lines. Some passages²⁴ in the last five acts of the *Mricchakatika* may be considered as betraying Bhasa's influence and it seems not altogether impossible to think that Shudraka was acquainted with works of Bhasa. A critical examination of the two plays will show that the text of Shudraka has improved and introduced better judged situations, passages and verses corresponding to those in the *Charudatta*. The hero's dilation on poverty in the first act of *Charudatta* comes to an abrupt end by the intervention of the scene with Vasantasena, and we feel that the situation could be more reasonably arranged. The author of the other play has certainly given a better account of his dramatic skill and has effected a judicious improvement in the situation when the hero is in deep concentration of mind to allow the scene with Vasantasena to continue in its normal process. Bhasa's text has more archaisms in Prakrit and the verses in the *Mricchakatika* are free from the flaws we notice in the corresponding verses in the *Charudatta*. In the differences between the two plays in all cases common to both, it is almost at all places better in the *Mricchakatika*. All this could be possible only if the hypothesis of a priority for Bhasa's work is accepted. The *Charudatta* version indicates a position of priority also in respect of the diction, dialogues, setting of scenes, the use of Prakrits, technique and versification. Some critics²⁵ have even considered the *Charudatta* as the original of Shudraka's work. Sukthankar²⁶ has observed in this connection that if the *Charudatta* is not the original of the *Mricchakatika* the latter 'has preserved a great deal of the original upon which the *Mricchakatika* is based.' Belvalkar is supported by Pusalker in the statement that the *Mricchakatika* completes the *Daridra-Charudatta*²⁷. In all probability the writer of

24. *Mricchakatika* VI. 17 holding arms as the fittest weapons can be seen in Bhasa's *Madhyama-vyayoga*, *Balacharita*, *Panchatantra* etc; Cf. Pusalker, *Bhasa — A Study*, P. 159 for other cases.

25. *Ibid.* p 160-61

26. *Op. cit.*

27. *Op. cit.*

the *Mricchakatika* flourished after Bhasa. The question of the date of Bhasa seems to have remained still an open issue, and we find him placed variously from the sixth century B.C. to the eleventh century A.D.²⁸ The two extremes may easily be ignored and Bhasa may be reasonably assigned a time shortly before the beginning of the Christian era. The issue of the date and identity of Shudraka gets a new look because of this relationship between the two playwrights.

All these facts lead us to believe again that there was perhaps a personality in ancient India worthy of the name of a king like Shudraka who later became more or less a legendary figure and hardly any historical truth can be gleaned now from a host of conflicting materials! Efforts have, however, been made by some scholars to establish Shudraka, the author of the drama, as an historical personality.

Sten Konow recognises²⁹ Shudraka as the *abhira*, a cow-herd prince, Shivadatta who ruled in the third century A.D. His son Ishvarasena, according to Fleet, overthrew the last of the Andhra dynasty and founded the *Cedi* era. Konow's conclusion is based on the incident in the drama in which king Palaka of Ujjayini is deposed by Aryaka, always mentioned as *gopala-daraka*, the son of a cow-herd, and as such should essentially be an *abhira* like Shivadatta. Konow's theory was subsequently discarded by scholars like Jolly, Jacobi and others³⁰.

Whether the expression *gopala-daraka* should mean 'the son of a cowherd' or that only his father's name was Gopala, i.e.—'the son of Gopala', can be again a point of controversy! Historians like Jayaswal and Bhandarkar³¹ find historical data in the episode of Aryaka and take Aryaka as the son of Gopala. They speak of Gopalaka and Palaka as the two sons of king Pradyota of Ujjayini. The younger Palaka ascended the throne either because Gopalaka abdicated or died leaving a young son. This child of Gopalaka was Aryaka who later deposed his uncle Palaka perhaps with the help of king Udayana, the husband of his aunt Vasavadatta. It is interesting to note that Sharvilaka compares Aryaka to Udayana and himself to Udayana's minister Yaugandharayana³²!

Sukumari Bhattacharya does not think it reasonable to see Aryaka as the son of a cowherd since, in her opinion,³³ it is not possible for a

28. *Ibid.* Chapter III

29. *Ind. Drama*, p. 57

30. See Kale (edn.) Introduction

31. M. Krishnamachariar, *History of Classical Sanskrit Literature* p. 578 fn.

32. *Mricchakatika* IV. 26

33. *Mricchakatika* Bengali Translation, Introduction p. 14

cowherd to speak in Sanskrit which Aryaka does in the drama, and, moreover, the observation about Aryaka in IX. 51 as having an honorable conduct and preserving family dignity etc. does not fit in properly if Aryaka is taken to be a cowherd-son! She does not accept the idea that Aryaka belonged to the community of cowherd.

But if Aryaka is not taken as a cowherd-boy, how are we to reconcile with the statement in the drama that 'Aryaka has been brought down from the settlement of cowherds'? It occurs several times in the play³⁴. Bhattacharya translates the relevant expression *ghoshad aniya*, brought from the settlement of cowherds, as 'having announced brought' etc. which is not convincing at all. Besides, the idea that a cowherd could not speak in Sanskrit, or that a cowherd-family could not possess the dignity and honour, as observed in the text,³⁵ are difficult to agree with.

Jaina *Harivamsha*, a work of the fourth century A.D. knows a king Palaka who ruled about the sixth century B.C. The *Skandapurana* speaks of a king named Shudraka who ruled about A.D. 190 and has been identified with Simuka, the founder of the Andhra-bhritya dynasty. This identification has been on the basis of a reference in the *Bhagavatapurana*³⁶ that the first Andhra King was a *shudra* commonly known as Shudraka. The name Simuka has been variously referred to as Sindhuka, Sisuka, Siphra indicating that the form was not yet settled aright and could be Shudraka, originally. In the *Bhagavata* the date of the founder of the Andhra-bhrityas has been put as 200 B.C. which does not agree with the date found in the *Skandapurana*. In view of the traditional type of chronology followed in the latter text it will not perhaps be correct to take it with an historical accuracy. The Andhra-bhrityas belonged to the South and the possibility of the dramatist being a southerner can not be ruled out. Like Aryaka the first of the Andhras is said to have become a king as the result of a revolution. A strong case may be made out of these facts to ascribe the drama to the founder of the Andhra-bhrityas who ruled about 200 B.C.

In the *Avantisundari-katha* we have a Brahmin-king Shudraka of Ujjayini who was a great poet and defeated Svati, an Andhra prince. An attempt has been made to identify our Shudraka with

34. Cf. IV. 24.3; VII. 5.3; X. 52.1

35. Cf. VII. 5, etc.,

36. III. 120

37. See Kale (Edn), *Mricchakatika* Intro. p. 21

Vikramaditya³⁷, the founder of the *samvat* era, inasmuch as the Andhra prince Svati whom Shudraka is supposed to have defeated ruled till about 56 B.C. It is therefore obvious that Shudraka of Dandin is different from the founder of the Andhra-bhrityas. It could be possible that the two Shudrakas merged into one personality in course of time, but we have no data in hand to support this hypothesis.³⁸

The date and identity of Shudraka have been further examined from other sources³⁹, and in the process Shudraka has been identified with king Shivakumara I, commonly known as Shivamara I. of the ancient Ganga royal house, and the younger brother of the gallant king Bhuvikrama. An expert in the Elephant-lore king Shivamara I is attributed with a treatise on the subject, and like shudraka as described in the prologue to the drama, 'felt fascinated at the idea of a personal encounter with the elephants.' He is also said to have lived full one hundred years and had his eyesight restored.⁴⁰ If our Shudraka is to be identified with this Ganga king, the author of the *Mricchakatika* has to be placed at a time between the last quarter of the seventh and first quarter of the eighth century A.D.⁴¹ whatever be the personal and other resemblances between our Shudraka and the Deccan ruler of the eighth century as detailed by Saletore⁴² in his exhaustive treatment of the problem, internal evidences of the drama do not allow us to agree to such a later date for the drama! It is not possible either to accept the dramatist as a predecessor of Asvaghosha or Bhasa, and place him in the second century B.C

The expression *rudro raja (ludde laya)*, king Rudra, in Act VIII 34, has been taken to mean king Rudradaman Kshatrapa⁴³ who ruled about A.D.130, as also to indicate king Rudrasena I or II of the Vakataka dynasty of about the fourth century A.D.⁴⁴ indicating thereby an association of the drama with either of the two periods. A king named Rudrasimha, a rival of Chandragupta Vikramaditya, and another king named Rudravarman of Dashapura of the fifth century A.D. are also known to us. It is not unlikely that this reference to king Rudra is about an historical personality, but who he actually was is perhaps not

38. *loc. cit.*

39. B.A. Saletore, *Journal of the University of Bombay*, Vol. XVI

40. *op. cit.*

41. *op. cit.*

42. *ibid*

43. See Kale as above

44. See Karmaikar (Edn.) *Mricchakatika*. p. ix

possible to ascertain in the present context of things! The term Rudra may not also point to any particular personality but has been used to suggest the overwhelming power or the fierceful nature of the ruling king, and this idea fits well with the nature or character of the ruling prince of the time as hinted at in the drama. We are given to understand that Palaka the ruler of Ujjayini of the time was known for his tyranny, misrule and autocracy!

Legal and astrological references found in the text may also be examined to determine the age and antiquity of the drama and the dramatist. In Act IX. 33 Mars is represented as opposed to Jupiter, and it is with older astronomers earlier than Varahamihira that Mars is represented as such. This may be considered as an evidence in favour of the antiquity of the composition and place it at a time earlier than the sixth century A.D. The planetary positions as described in the text⁴⁵ are extremely inauspicious for a man having them in his horoscope. The belief in the disastrous effects of such planetary positions may indicate a time when India had already adopted the Greek system of horoscope. The Greek system is known to have been already in vogue in India when Varahamihira wrote the astrological chapter of his *Brihatsamhita*. The Greek system had been known in India as the *Romaka siddhanta* and the possibility of the system being known in India in the first century A.D. through Rome or Alexandria cannot be ignored! It is interesting to note that there were at least three Sanskrit works on Greek astrology during the first and second centuries A.D. It could be possible as a result of India's direct trade relations with Egypt which existed even before the first century A.D. Jacobi considered the astrological references in Act VI. 9-10 to put the drama to the end of the fourth century A.D.⁴⁶

Jolly takes up the legal procedure of trial of convicts by ordeals as shown in Act IX. 43, to assign to the drama a date later than the seventh century A.D.⁴⁷ He is of the opinion that such trials of convicts by ordeals indicate a date later than the *smritis* of Narada and Brihaspati who prescribe such methods. but the procedure as we have it in this drama has, however, a close resemblance to the procedure prescribed by the earlier law-book of Yajnavalkya.⁴⁸ It is stated there that when human agencies fail in deciding legal matters, the trials by balance, fire, water,

45. VI. 9-10

46. *Bhavisatta kaha* (Edn.) p. 83

47. Cf. Tagore Law Lectures 1883. p. 19ff.

48. Yajnavalkya Smriti II. 7. 95ff.

poison and a particular kind of water to be drunk by the defendant (*kosha*) are the divine methods of purification to be resorted to!

The term *nanaka* in the drama (I. 23) meaning perhaps 'a coin', is supposed to have come into vogue in India by the time of Kanishka and this should indicate a date after the first century A.D. The word *kayastha* to designate a court official in Act IX is also to be considered in this connection. The word is not found in *Manusmriti* and is perhaps traceable for the first time in the text of Yajnavalkya belonging to a period not later than the fourth century A.D.

The comparatively respectable position enjoyed by Shakara, the *vitas* as also the privileged status of the courtesan-heroine (*ganika*) exhibit an atmosphere of social existence as to be found in the *Kamasutra*, the text book on erotic, probably belonging to the second century B.C. We have evidences in the text itself to make us think that the dramatist has followed Vatsyayana in a faithful manner. The reference to the arts of erotics, the behaviour of courtesans etc., in the drama confirm this idea. While describing the sixth quadrangle of Vasantasena's palace in Act IV, Maitreya refers to the offering of the betel-leaf (*tambula*) with camphor to the gallants and courtesans.⁴⁹ On the authority of Vatsyayana⁵⁰ we know that the offering of the betel-leaf was a medium of love-making in ancient India, and it became very much a part of our culture in about the fourth century A.D.

Charudatta and Sharvilaka are both *brahmin* by birth or caste, but they fall in love with *shudra*-women. Manu prohibits such relationship in the age of *kali*. Should it then be considered as reflecting a society anterior to the prohibition codified by Manu or as indicating a period of social demoralisation when the laws of Manu were not followed strictly enough! It is interesting to note, and may be considered significant for our purpose, that Shakara quotes at random from various ancient texts but never from a Purana! This fact has led to the suggestion that the drama 'was written prior to the composition of Purana texts or at least before the stories they contain had acquired by their aggregation familiar and popular currency'.⁵¹ In the drama we have glimpses of a flourishing state of Buddhism and it may bring to our mind the fact that the early history of the Deccan⁵² confirms the flourishing state of Buddhism as a religion during the rule of the Andhra-bhrityas.

49. Mukt. IV. 28. 11

50. *Kamasutra* V 4.

51. Wilson, *The Theatre of the Hindus*, p. 54

52. D.R. Bhandarkar, *Early History of the Dekkan*, p. 31

A critical examination of all available data on Shudraka's identity and time, which should also decide the problem of the authorship of the *Mricchakatika*, will perhaps not allow us to hold any categorical opinion on the question! Both internal and external evidences appear to be so confusing and contradictory at every step that the task of anybody trying to explore the truth in this respect becomes worse confounded!

Whether our Shudraka was the founder of the Andhra-bhritya dynasty or was the Ganga king Shivamara I, or was a king of Ujjayini, is, as indicated above, extremely difficult to solve convincingly at present. It is also not possible however, to brush aside the ancient and universal tradition of the existence of a poet Shudraka as purely mythical or legendary. It will perhaps not be unreasonable to hold that the author of the *Mricchakatika* flourished at a time between the first and the second centuries of the Christian era, and there is no reason why the composition should not be ascribed to a person named Shudraka and who was a king as well!

2

WORKS OF SHUDRAKA

MRICCHAKATIKAM

Although a *bhāna* entitled *Padmaprabhritakam* and a drama of the title with *Vinavasavadattam* have been ascribed to Shudraka in some sources¹ he is universally acknowledged as the author of the *Mricchakatikam*. The humorous *bhāna* is certainly a good work of poetic art and an attractive composition of the class to which it belongs, but in its style, spirit, language and treatment it does not create that confidence in us to hold it as the work of the author of the *Mricchakatika*. The *Vinavasavadatta* is an incomplete play in four acts which perhaps has a second title as *Vatsarajacharita*.² Resemblances with the works of Bhasa have been noted in this play³ but we do not possess as yet any convincing data to ascribe it either to Bhasa or Shudraka. The *Mricchakatika* has been, however, handed down as the work of Shudraka, and in spite of the controversies among scholars about its authorship⁴ we will perhaps not be on the wrong side to accept the traditional account and evaluate the drama as the composition of Shudraka.

This work of Shudraka is a *prakarana* type of dramatic composition which presents the love-episode of Charudatta, a poor but noble brahmin tradesman of Ujjayini, and Vasantasena, a rich and attractive courtesan of the same place, which ends in their happy union. The main theme of the play has been furnished with various impressive and attractive incidents and actions to make the work of Shudraka the most enjoyable one in the whole range of Sanskrit dramatic literature.

1. See *supra* ; De & Dasgupta, *History of Sanskrit Literature* p. 761

2. Krishnamachariar, *History of Sanskrit Literature* p. 758

3. *loc. cit.*

4. See *supra*

The primary condition of a *prakarana* to which class this drama belongs, is that it should be a drama of invention, i.e., the plot should be an invention of the poet, *kavi-kalpita*, based on worldly life focusing on the actions of men and women. In this respect Shudraka's drama fulfills the condition of dramaturgy quite well, and even goes beyond it to be considered as 'the only drama of invention'⁵. As are the requirements of the type of composition the main theme has been presented in ten acts, the predominant sentiment (*rasa*) is love or *shringara*, a deep and calm (*dhira-prashanta*) brahmin is the hero, of the two heroines, one, i.e., Dhuta, is born of a noble family, *kulaja*, and the other, Vasantasena, is a public woman or *ganika*, and this makes the composition a mixed or *samkirna* type of *prakarana*. It comprises ten acts and is infested with crafty characters, *dhurta-sankula*. An important characteristic of this type of drama is that the denouement, *karya*, of the plot should result from the activities of a person other than the hero, *anayaka-harya-karyam*.⁶ The theme of the love-affair of the hero and the heroine gets a charged progress in this play by the activities of Shakara and Sharvilaka who may be taken to be the adversary of the hero, *prati-nayaka*, and the sub-hero, *upa-nayaka*, respectively. Their activities contribute to the complexities of the plot leading to the final crisis and at the same time a happy solution of all problems! To the utter discomfiture of his adversary the hero is united with the heroine by the *upa-nayaka* Sharvilaka. The denouement is thus the result of the activities of characters other than the hero, *anayaka*.

While the composition is in agreement with the rules of dramaturgy in broad principles the play of Shudraka does not, however, follow the *shastra* on some important points, and this fact has perhaps given our author full scope for his talent in invention to operate. It may not be altogether unreasonable to think that the drama was composed at a time when no hard and fast rules of dramaturgy had evolved. Among the principal cases of disagreement with the canons we note that the hero does not appear in all the acts and the heroine belonging to the noble family, *kulasri*, i.e., Dhuta, the wife of Charudatta, meets the other heroine, Vasantasena, a public woman, in the tenth act which has been expressly prohibited in the *shastra*. It is said that the *kulasri* or the heroine belonging to the noble family is for the inner apartment,

5. Ryder, *The Little Clay Cart*. xviii

6. *Dasharupaka*, III.42

abhyantara, whereas the *ganika*-heroine, i.e., the public-woman heroine, is for outside the family, *bahya*, and the two should never meet, *natikramo'nayoh*.⁷ Interestingly enough our dramatist has not employed any Interlude, *vishkambhaka* or *praveshaka*, but has used unusual scenes, not permitted under rules to be enacted on the stage, depicting sleep, execution, strangulation, and even embrace.⁸ These scenes as we find them set in the drama have added to the naturalness of the composition, and have contributed much to its success as an attractive play.

As a *prakarana* Shudraka's work has to be a drama of invention, but that does not perhaps indicate that everything presented in the drama should be the creation of the imagination of the dramatist! The dramatist may be inspired by a story, he may get the idea about a theme from threads scattered here and there or even some parts of his own plot may be found in some work of his predecessor, and the inventive faculty or originality of the dramatist puts the matter together and presents it according to his own ideas by transforming the material to a final attractive shape. Shudraka's drama is a remarkable specimen of original production, although some parts or ideas of the theme in its broad outline may be found scattered in earlier works. Whatever hints of the plot, main or subsidiary, can be traced elsewhere Shudraka has certainly presented a drama of invention unique in its kind, innovative in its presentation and remarkable in its dramatic qualities. These elements of the play have perhaps prompted a critic like Ryder to hold the drama of Shudraka as the 'only drama of invention'.⁹

An attempt to search out the sources or elements of the theme of the drama in earlier works should not be considered as questioning the worth of the author in his originality or inventive talent. On the otherhand, a study in its sources may help us in gauging the originality of the writer in its true measure and scrutinising the literary influences that might have worked in background.

It appears that the love-episode of Charudatta and Vasantasena was popularly known at the time of Shudraka just as the Udayana legend can be supposed to have been popularly current at the time of Bhasa. It is possible that Shudraka got a clue to the theme of his drama from the floating folk-tales of the time and transformed it into a work of his

7 *loc cit*.

8. *Sahitya Darpana*, VI.7

9 *op cit*

own. Fragments of the Charudatta story may be traced in the *Kathasaritsagara*, the *Dashakumara charita*, the *agamas* of the Jainas, the Buddhist Jatakas, and from all these accounts it may be deduced that the story-element was long known in India, and Hindu, Jain or Buddhist writers drew from the same sources for their literary creations.

In the *Kathasaritsagara* is found depicted the love of Kumudika for Shridhara, a Brahmin of Ujjayini, which bears a strong resemblance to the love of Vasantasena for Charudatta. Kumudika's love for Shridhara was responsible for putting the hero in prison, but Kumudika's help to the king in regaining his lost kingdom brought the release of Shridhara from the grateful king, and the hero and the heroine were united happily.¹⁰ The *Kathasaritsagara* also presents the episode of Rupanika where we find the rich courtesan Rupanika having an affair with a poor, young and handsome Brahmin.¹¹ Very much similar to Vasantasena falling in love with Charudatta at first sight Rupanika has the first glimpse of her hero in a temple. Like Vasantasena Rupanika also did not care for wealth but valued more the accomplishments of her man of choice. Like the gambler Samvahaka of the *Mricchakatika* we find a gambler taking shelter in a forlorn temple in the *Kathasaritsagara*.¹² While considering these threads of stories found in Somadeva's work of the eleventh century we have to bear in mind that the *Kathasaritsagara* is the Sanskritised version of Gunadhya's *Brihatkatha* of about the first century A.D.

An affinity with the account of Act VIII of our drama may be discovered in the account of the thief Vijaya depicted in the Jaina *Nayadhammakahao*.¹³ The love-episode of the hero and heroine of Shudraka may find an echo in the love-episode in the Tamil Jain text *Shilappadikaram*.¹⁴ The Buddhist Jataka stories of Sulasa and Sama may be found to have close resemblances with the story of Vasantasena. The car-episode found in this drama seems to have its counterpart in the story of Sama, also a courtesan, in the Jataka accounts. It is not unlikely that this episode of cars of the Jataka story has been employed by Shudraka with great effect and ingenuity in his composition.

The *Dashakumaracharita* of Dandin depicts¹⁵ a social life similar to that of this drama and the account of Ragamanjari in the work

10. *Katha. s.s.*, Lambaka X, Taranga II

11. *ibid.* L II, t. IV

12. *ibid.* L. VII, t. IV

13. N. V. Vaidya (Edn) Ch. II, 47 ff.

14. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar (Edn)

15. Chapter II, *Unarapithika*

reminds us of the story of Vasantasena. In Ragamanjari we get the spirit of Vasantasena. Ragamanjari is also a lover of virtues and desires to become a *vadhu* and not to remain a public woman. Whether Shudraka has been benefited by Dandin can be ascertained by the solution of the problem of mutual relationship between the two writers.

The Aryaka-episode of Shudraka has been suggested to have been a political reality. The revolution as referred to in this Play may be due to the author's intention to record a contemporary historical event.

The discovery of the *Charudatta* ascribed to Bhasa has given rise to a heated controversy about the mutual relation between the *Charudatta* and the *Mricchakatika*. Is it possible to accept Bhasa as the author of both the dramas or that they are based on a common but independent source? Is the *Charudatta* an earlier version and the *Mricchakatika* an elaboration of the same, or that the *Charudatta* is only an abridgement of the other? The problem has been noted above in connection with the suggested common authorship of the two compositions. The two works have been recognised as different works and *Natyadarpana* mentions them side by side. To determine the relationship between the two it is necessary to bring out the points of similarity, variation or contradiction between the two.

We find Shudraka's sympathy for Buddhism as against Bhasa's inclinations towards Brahmanism. Bhasa uses *suvarna*, gold coin, for Shudraka's *nanaka*, whereas the *sthapana* in the *Charudatta* is shorter than its counterpart in the *Mricchakatika*, Shudraka's Stage Manager (*sutradhara*) shifts from Sanskrit to Prakrit, but Bhasa's Manager speaks in Prakrit only. The long soliloquy of the Manager in Shudraka has been cut to size in Bhasa. Humour, characterisation, varied and suspenseful actions are some of the significant points to mark Shudraka's work as an independent one. Pusalker considers the *Mricchakatika* as a later work where verses and passages from the *Charudatta* have been placed in a suitable context. Ruben does not accept the Bhasa-play as a source for Shudraka's work and considers the former as a crippled fragment of Shudraka's drama. It is indeed difficult a problem to solve for want of definite and adequate data if we can expect to think Bhasa's play as one of the sources for Shudraka! We can not, however, deny the fact that indications are not wanting to

make us think Shudraka's play as an enlarged version of the *Charudatta*, there is no scope to discuss this problem here in much detail and readers may be well advised to consult the writings of Pusalker, Winternitz, Devadhar, Ruben, Sukthankar and others on this problem.¹⁶

In the Prologue to his drama Shudraka has given us in a nut-shell the topics he has dealt with while narrating the love-affair between the noble but poor Brahmin Charudatta of the city of Avanti (i.e., Ujjayini) and the courtesan Vasantasena who was like the beauty of spring¹⁷. All these matters will be shown in subsequent sections.

16. Cf. Pusalker, *Bhasa – A Study*; Devadhar, *Plays ascribed to Bhasa*

17. *Mricchakatika* I. 6-7

3

SHUDRAKA—THE DRAMATIST

Shudraka's *Play* is a creation of outstanding brilliance, a real drama of life, a remarkable composition with distinct dramatic qualities which deviates from the beaten track. The drama of Shudraka is 'so remarkable, so full of dramatic life, vigour and freshness, so full of transcendent wit and humour'¹ that we find it difficult to hold him indebted to a predecessor for his materials or to mark him out as belonging to any school or community for the brilliant treatment of the matters! It is perhaps possible only to say that Shudraka 'lived in an enlightened age, he received a finished education of poetic art, he inherited what his predecessors created'² but every bit of his creation is artistic and original, captivating and brilliant,

It is significant to note that while occidental critics have all praise for the drama Indian critics have not given the drama its due and seems to have paid greater attention to masterpieces of Bhasa, Kalidasa or Bhavabhuti. It is perhaps a correct appraisal of the situation that Shudraka's *Mricchakatika* 'enjoys abroad a celebrity which it did not enjoy at home....'³ The sacred mythological topics of the dramas of Bhasa or Kalidasa with the divine or semi-divine status of the principal characters delineated therein might have commanded greater respect or attention in the traditional minds than what the *Play* of Shudraka with its worldly characters dealing with the lovestory of a poor Brahmin hero and a courtesan heroine could possibly wield. The history of our ancient literature will bear out the fact that a literary work without a tinge of religious or mythological influence was a rare thing and the

1. Nishikanta Chattopadhyay, *Mricchakatika -A Study*, p. 4 (Reprint Edn.)

2. *op. cit.* x

3. R. P. Olivier, *The Little Clay Cart*, Intro.

ancient Indian mind was so religiously conscious that it was not prepared to recognise or accept the merits of a literary work if it did not belong to that traditional category. In the background of an orthodox and religion-oriented Indian mind of those days Shudraka's work appears to be a revolutionary one and may be considered as a singular achievement on the part of its author. A true humanist, a keen observer of men and society Shudraka with his rare dramatic genius has drawn his characters from all walks of life, the ordinary and downtrodden, so long unheard and unsung in our literary productions! The Play as a whole responds so much to the modern taste with its story-element and characters being refreshingly unsteretyped, and the stage, technique and approach being thoroughly unconventional.

A Sanskrit drama does not divide its acts into scenes, but it is evident that Shudraka's Play represents a series of scenes in all the acts. While the acts of a drama are marked by the exit and entrance of personalities of a particular scene, in this drama the scenes run at a stretch with different scenes skilfully put together in the same act. Shudraka's treatment and arrangement of acts and scenes do not presuppose any sophisticated stage as prescribed by Bharata nor does his scheme of the scenes give us any idea about the stereotyped stagecraft of the age of Kalidasa. His stage appears to have been a bigger one to allow several scenes sometimes with sub-scenes, to be presented at the same time. The scenes being of diversified nature, one occurring in the set of a house and the other in the city streets, it was difficult to accommodate such scenes on a stage having no system of division by screen. Scenes like those in acts VI, VII, IX and X could not be performed in the mechanized stage of Bharata. In all probability Shudraka's was an open-air theatre with wide area to help the entry of carts or show the jumping of the attendant of Shakara from the housetop. Though Bharata approves of a miniature form of chariot etc. to be shown on the stage, nowhere we have any reference to a normal-size cart being exhibited in reality which is but essential in the drama for its suspense, development and denouement. To make his drama a true medium for entertainment the dramatist has not hesitated to work according to his ideas and has not adhered to any tradition or accepted principle in the distribution of languages even. As a dramatist of an earlier period and a projector of the life and habits of the common people he has produced a drama to be performed in the natural background to entertain the real common folk who may use different

dialects. Most of his characters are low-born people and the dramatist has done justice to his every man and woman by allowing them to speak in their own unsophisticated tongue. As a result a large number of *prakrits* and dialects find place in the drama making it a drama of the people in its true sense! The drama must have been composed at a time when Prakrit was a living speech among the people. It was spoken by the people, understood by them and was as natural to the folk as a spoken tongue should be.

We have already mentioned about the absence of Interludes in the drama which have been instructed by Bharata as technicalities to avoid detailed account of the story by an abridged one. These are supposed to help the drama proceed in a natural course, but Shudraka introduces his scenes with all relevant detail and his skill is such that the drama does not appear to be uninteresting for a moment. The sequence of events has not been disturbed nor do the readers or spectators find it difficult to follow the development of the plot in the absence of these interludes, and the eventful acts have flown at ease in quick succession! Shudraka has exhibited a remarkable dramatic sense and skill in creating situations or selecting events of significance only to be represented in the acts with the effect that his drama moves on with a speed rare in a Sanskrit drama. The acts depict the incidents that are actually necessary for the development of the theme and sometimes only hint at the necessary incidents without a recourse to the interludes. A drama of action and variety of incidents like the *Mricchakatika* can not perhaps have any scope for interludes, and we do nowhere find the Play suffering from the loss of any connecting link.

Shudraka has created interesting situations in the drama when the *dramatis personae* have to make appearance on the stage from the audience itself! In the tenth act we find Sthavaraka and Shakara playing this dual role, first as a part of the audience and then in the role of a dramatic character in the scene proper. This technique of projecting a person in two types of role in a drama is known as *natyayita*⁴ and Shudraka has used it with great success. Such a technique was perhaps not possible to be employed on the mechanized stage of Bharata who just mentions it in two verses without much detail.⁵ It is possible that this type of presentation in a Play was in vogue before the time of Bharata.

4. Cf. *Abhinava Bharati* (G.O.S.), III, 178

5. *Natyashastra*, XXIV, 46-47

While commenting on the excellence of Shudraka's creation it has been observed by Ryder⁶ that 'Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti are Hindus of the Hindus; the Shakuntala and the Latter Acts of Rama could have been written nowhere save in India; but Shudraka alone in the long line of Indian dramatists, has a cosmopolitan character. Shakuntala is a Hindu maid, Madhava is a Hindu hero; but Samsthana, and Maitreya and Madanika are citizens of the world'.

Karmarkar⁷ objects to this observation of Ryder and says that 'Dr. Ryder has clearly missed the whole point here'. In the opinion of Karmarkar the 'atmosphere in the Mrcchakatika is hardly different from that in the Shakuntala. Charudatta and Vasantasena.... are Hindu ideals of man and woman... Even the low characters are permeated with the spirit of Hinduism with its ideas about after-life and the doctrine of Karman.... . Maitreya and Samsthana are essentially of the same Hindu stuff, breathing the same atmosphere though their acts are rather out-of-the-way.

Ryder's observation, it seems, takes into account this 'out-of-the-way' characteristics of the dramatic characters and Karmarkar has not perhaps examined Ryder's remarks in their proper perspectives. The characters have been portrayed here like real human beings with all their vices and virtues, which are not to be found in any of our ancient dramas. A Rama or a Dushyanta, a Sita or a Shakuntala can not be expected to be seen in any society or country excepting in India. They are, to all intents and purpose, products of the religious or mythological Indian mind. But what about the characters like Shakara, Maitreya, Sharvilaka and even the chandalas! Certainly they are Indians in body and mind working under Indian belief and thought as no author can rise above the influence of his own soil and traditions to create characters which will exhibit traits and habits of the world at large. But we can not deny that the characters of Shudraka are very much unlike the chosen Indian characters of other Sanskrit dramas, they are Hindus yet they can be expected to come out of any society! A knave like the Shakara can be found anywhere, it is not necessary for him to be a Hindu only for all his acts and ideas. Any nobleman's son in any part of the world can turn a burglar and even perform heroic deeds for the sake of his country. A courtesan at any place or time can forsake her profession and aspire to become a housewife to win her man of

6. Ryder, *The Little Clay Cart*, xvii

7. Karmarkar, *Mrcchakatika* (Edn), p. xix

love. These features mark out Shudraka's characters as individuals of any time or clime, and it is perhaps not without justification that Ryder calls them 'citizens of the world'. In these characters we see before us living men and women whom we may encounter with anywhere, we recognise in them the personalities we see around us,—they are undoubtedly Indians but at the same time they have an universalism in their nature, career and action which perhaps prompted Ryder to make the observation. Peculiar habits, interesting contradictions, impressive ideas and human aspirations invest Shudraka's men and women with such universal traits for which they can be rightly termed as cosmopolitan characters.

Some critics find fault with the drama as being too lengthy and materials for two dramas are also discovered in the treatment of the plot⁸. The drama is certainly lengthy but this fact does not in any way affect the merits of the composition adversely. We have every reason to agree with Henry W. Wells⁹ that the *Mricchakatika* is a long play singularly lacking in longueurs and its diversified actions and quick-changing situations have made the drama highly interesting and forceful keeping the audience anxious throughout. No other Sanskrit Play has such varied and enlivening incidents full of suspense to keep the interest of the audience unflagging right upto end. The discovery of materials for two dramas in the plot of the drama is not at all a correct assessment and the point has been discussed hereafter.

Shudraka has certainly gone off the accepted norms in entitling his drama after an apparently minor and insignificant incident. The rules of dramaturgy lay down that a dramatic composition should be named after the hero and the heroine or a principal character or an important event in the drama. But we find Shudraka moving on a path unknown to others in giving his composition a title after a playful action of the heroine! He has been bold and original enough in this respect, but a careful examination of the incident will, however, show that it is not so much of a trivial character as it appears to be; on the other hand, it forms the core of the development of the theme. In the beginning of the sixth act the heroine fills the earthen toy-cart of the son of the hero with ornaments taken off her person to satisfy the child. The child is satisfied but the ornaments become the source of greatest calamity to befall the hero! The action of the heroine out of sympathy and affection

8. See *infra*.

9. *The Classical Drama of India*, p. 150

for the son of her chosen man turns out to be a curse on the hero and the drama is all set to flow in a different course. The impact of this apparently harmless incident is too great on the development of the drama and the ingenuity of Shudraka in the selection of the title deserves our appreciation. The ornaments which play a significant role in bringing the hero and the heroine closer to each other earlier become responsible for sending the hero to the gallows later! The little toy-cart can be said to have been introduced as a link between these two contradictory situations in the life of the hero. The craving of the crying boy with his childish discontent in his poverty-stricken condition leads to the worst tragedy in the family. The small incident also indicates the fulfilment of the heart's desire of the heroine. By removing the ornaments from her body and filling the clay cart with them Vasantasena wins the heart of the child and her ambition to be one with the family of Charudatta seems to be fulfilled!

Brevity, clarity and simplicity are the characteristics of Shudraka's writing in which similes and metaphors drawn from the most common objects of our daily life have been used in the most befitting manner. His delineation of the diverse and different facets of human life and nature is superb. He never exaggerates any point and expresses exactly that much which is needed for the proper assessment or understanding of a situation. 'His lucid but simple style is so clear and transparent, so grand and majestic, so homely and colloquial, so expressive and impressive¹⁰ that Shudraka's creation generates an ever-increasing interest in the minds of the connoisseurs of literary art all over the world. He has created his characters with such human elements and naturalness that the Play of Shudraka never becomes old, stale, boring or uninteresting.

Shudraka has an excellent command over sense and sound. In his intelligent selection of words and phrases he has exhibited his skill in making the dialogues lively, refreshing and attractive. It is true that in Shudraka we miss the grace of Kalidasa or the eloquence of Bhavabhuti, and he does not compare favourably with Kalidasa in suggestiveness, but what attracts us most is his direct and simple style. His expressions are graphic and forcible, clear and comprehensive, free from long unwieldy compounds and involved constructions. We find descriptions subordinated to actions and descriptive prose elements

10. N. K. Chattopadhyay, *Mricchakatika—A Study* (Reprint Edn), p. x

far too less in the composition. That Shudraka is capable of writing descriptive prose full of compounds has been exhibited fully in the description of the mansion of the heroine. This description is, however, a sort of diversion for the spectators who for the moment are taken off the guard by the brilliant description tinged with characteristic humour.

The drama abounds in pithy and witty sayings and 'many memorable stanzas of great beauty conveying homely morals or embodying worldly wisdom'¹¹ are scattered all over the text. The richness of his prophetic sentences can not but be admired! The depth of worldly knowledge conveyed through such sentences and expressions have attained almost a proverbial status in our day-to-day life. Charudatta's utterances reflecting on poverty come from the bitter realization of worldly affairs and many around us may find in these an echo of their personal experiences!—'a gem is united with a gem' (I. 32. 9), 'a garden-creeper does not deserve to be robbed off its blossoms' (I. 30. 14), 'in accordance with the course of fortune riches remain or depart' (I. 13), 'love is perverse' (V. 9. 7), 'Affection brooks no delay' (VII. 4. 16), 'it is not proper to look at another's wife' (I. 54. 1),—these are only a few of the numerous sayings found in the composition which have become proverbs. Shudraka's experience of man and society and the depth of his worldly knowledge are evident from the utterances of his characters. In the third act as soon as the lamp is blown off Sharvilaka exclaims, 'have I also not brought darkness on my family'! Maitreya's remark that 'a courtesan is just like a pebble got inside a shoe to be warded off with difficulty' (V. 7. 4) and that 'it is hardly possible to find a lotus-creeper that grows without a root, a merchant that does not cheat, a goldsmith who does not steal, a village-assembly without a quarrel' (V. 6. 7),—are some of Shudraka's specimens which exhibit our author at his best as a keen observer of the society. His idioms, phrases or meaningful expressions mark out Shudraka as having profound worldly wisdom and also as a social preacher.

Sanskrit dramatists are essentially poets and they take every opportunity to exhibit their skill in versification at least in describing Nature in the context of human emotions and feelings. There are instances in the drama when Shudraka has also shown his

11. M.R. Kale (Edn) *Mricchakatika* Intro., p. 50

proneness towards such versification¹² at the cost of rapid dramatic movement. It should be noted, however, that the alternating verses of Vasantasena and her *vita* in the fifth act have held out the divergent aspects of nature which is poetic and choreographic. The last verse in the fifth act is an example of the skill of Shudraka in tuning the rhythmic effects of letters or words with the object of description!

Shudraka has given evidence of his skill in arranging his scenes in a way hitherto unknown but which has added to the attractiveness to his drama. Almost in every act he has several scenes, one connected with the other and staged simultaneously. We find Maitreya going out with Radanika with a lamp in her hand in the first act when Vasantasena puts the lamp off to make her hiding safe, and Maitreya goes back to re-light the lamp. Radanika stands alone in the darkness on the street in front of Charudatta's house and is suddenly grasped by the hair by Shakara who takes her to be Vasantasena. We have here two scenes before us, one enacted inside and the other outside the residence of the hero. Inside the house the hero is sitting in meditation and the dramatist is allowed to put into action the chase of Vasantasena. The portion where the hero is sitting remains inactive and dark whereas the scene laid on the street becomes lively. In the modern stage we often come across such simultaneous scenes. Two scenes are enacted again at the same time when Vasantasena enters Charudatta's house stealthily and Shakara and Maitreya challenge each other at the door. When Maitreya advises Radanika not to report about her manhandling to Charudatta we find Charudatta asking Radanika to wrap his son with his mantle and take him away inside. But it is not Radanika but Vasantasena standing in the darkness before Charudatta, and Vasantasena is in an awkward position, she can neither move inside nor respond to Charudatta! While Maitreya and Radanika are standing outside at the door the hero and the heroine doing their jobs inside. two scenes have been thus put at one time. The opening scene in the second act is linked up with the gambler's scene with a skilful staging of the scene of Vasantasena and Samvahaka, which is again significantly connected with the scene of Karnapuraka, the fourth in the sequence. Here also we have scenes on the streets as well as in the house of the heroine blended together skilfully. The scenes in this

12. Cf. Act I. 17 ff. chasing Vasantasena; Act. V.1 ff. describing a rainy day and 12 ff. on journey of Vasantasena.

way run through without break with actions and situations in quick succession providing the play with a tremendous speed. The actions seem to be spontaneous which keep the spectators inquisitively anxious for the next moment and the composition of the length of *Mricchakatika* does never appear boring and colourless.

Unique in its treatment, actions and situations, humour and characterisation the drama has certainly an uncommon flavour to earn rich encomiums from critics. It is regarded as a real drama of life and held in the highest appreciation for its exceptional dramatic qualities. A pertinent question may be raised here. In spite of its dramatic success and attractiveness why the *Mricchakatika* could not inspire any dramatist to emulate Shudraka! The answer to this question may not be far to seek, and we may hold the prejudice of the conservative and religion-oriented ancient Indian society, as indicated above, to be responsible for this lack of interest.

A. W. Ryder in the Introduction to his English translation of the composition has been critical about the construction of the Play. In his opinion¹³ 'the main action halts through acts II to V', and also discovers in the drama 'the material for two plays.' He does not find any real connection of the second act with the main plot, and thinks that parts of the first act along with acts VI to X, may give us 'a consistent and ingenious plot'. Ryder further suggests that remaining parts of 'act I might be combined with acts III to V to make a pleasing comedy of lighter tone'.¹⁴

This criticism seems to have been prompted by a wrong approach on the part of Ryder and his failure to follow or assess the incidents and situations in their correct perspectives. An analysis of the contents of the acts¹⁵ will show that the main action of the drama has not at all halted 'through acts II to V', as viewed by Ryder, although these acts certainly do not possess the rapidity with which the remaining five acts have advanced. Here we may indicate the line of arguments in justifying the inclusion of these four acts in the body of the Play to make it a full drama with a theme properly developed.

The second act which is the starting point of Ryder's criticism is not a digression or 'developed so elaborately for the sheer joy of creation.' The second act comprises several scenes which certainly

13. Ryder, *op.cit.*

14. *loc.cit.*

15. See *infra*

provide much fun and humour, but the act as a whole has an useful bearing on the theme and the scenes help to intensify the heroine's attraction for the hero. Vasantasena promptly offers a helping hand to poor Samvahaka, the distressed gambler, not indeed so much for her benevolent nature, as for her spontaneous reaction to help one who has looked after the hero she adores! She actually advises the freed gambler to use the art he has mastered in the service of the same person, i.e., the hero, he served before and for whose sake the particular art has been learnt by him! The scene of the gambler is not at all a detached one. The gambler turns a Buddhist monk in this act and returns in act VIII to rescue the heroine and to help in the union of the hero and the heroine in a tense situation in act X! Without this scene the drama would not have proceeded so well upto the desired denouement, and as such it connects itself with the main stream quite effectively.

The apparently insignificant episode of Karnapuraka in the same act is also not irrelevant or unnecessary as to have halted the progress of the main theme. The hero's generous actions in appreciation of Karnapuraka's exemplary courage as narrated by Karnapuraka himself undoubtedly help to deepen the heroine's attraction for the hero to a large extent. The jasmine-scented mantle obtained by Karnapuraka from Charudatta in appreciation of Karnapuraka's commendable feat, is handed over to Vasantasena who wraps it round her own person exhibiting a passionate yearning for the hero. The gambler's episode establishes a link between the two lovers through the mantle and the main story proceeds along the desired track. The mantle has a significant emotional effect on Vasantasena's attitude. It is the same mantle that the hero threw at her in the first act mistaking her as Radanika¹⁶ and from the jasmine-scent in the mantle Vasantasena realized that the hero was not indifferent to the attachments of the youth!¹⁷ This certainly emboldened her to go ahead with her cherished desire to win over her man. In the beginning of the second act is found an echo of this in Vasantasena's conversation with her confidante Madanika.

In this connection we have to remember that so long Vasantasena has seen her hero only once and perhaps like so many others in the city of Ujjayini has received only indirect reports about the

16. *Mricchakatika* I, 52. 11

17. *op.cit.* 'The mantle is fragrant with jamine scent. He appears to be not indifferent to (attachments) of youth'!

magnanimity and benevolent nature of Charudatta. Shudraka wants his heroine to have an unaccountable image and makes her receive direct evidences or reports from those who have personal knowledge and experience about the nobility and greatness of Charudatta. Nothing could serve this purpose better than the episodes of Samvahaka and Karnapuraka. She is confident that her affair with Charudatta will not create any suspicion about her motive, a courtesan as she is. Vasantasena herself declares that people will not accuse her or doubt her sincerity in her attachment to Charudatta since she loves a poverty-stricken man.¹⁸ A review of the contents of the second act will convince us that the act not only does not retard the progress of the drama but contribute much to the development of the plot.

The third act is neither 'a complete digression' nor its effect is dubious on the main stream of the play by any measure. We get here a reference to the revolution which ultimately overthrows the despot king and the episode of burglary makes a significant contribution influencing the course of the play. If the ornaments were not stolen from the custody of Charudatta the consummation of love of the hero and the heroine as we have it in Act V would have been delayed. The act also brings into light the greatness of heart of both Dhuta and Charudatta. Dhuta, the wife of Charudatta and the other heroine of the drama, makes her first appearance here. Dhuta learns about the burglary from Madanika and her immediate reaction is to know if her husband and Maitreya are uninjured in body.¹⁹ On being told that they are safe but the ornaments of the courtesan in the custody of her husband have been carried off, she faints and declares that her husband's physical injury is preferable to this possible stain in his character. She offers her only jewel necklace in recompense of the stolen ornaments. Charudatta also gives evidence of his nobility when he declares that he would even beg for the requital of the deposit.²⁰ The fun and humour in which the scene has been set bear out the skill of the dramatist. The significance of this act is well realized as the drama advances through. It is in fact an act which gives the drama a new direction and all that happens later can be regarded as logical consequences of the burglary. There is no reason why this act should be thought as irrelevant in the main action of the play! The technical and dramatic skill of Shudraka

18. *Mricchakatika* II. 0. 61

19. *Mricchakatika* III. 26. 10

20. *Mricchakatika* III. 26; also cf. III. 29

can not be missed in the creation of these two acts which have significantly contributed to the success of the drama.

So long we have seen Vasantasena as deeply attracted towards Charudatta and we have also got glimpses of the nobility of her character, but in the fourth act she appears in a more favourable light. It seems that the dramatist is steadily preparing the ground to make her heroine a rightful claimant to the coveted title of *vadhu*, a legal wife. In the beginning of the act she has given evidence of the strength of her character by refusing the fabulous offer of Shakara.²¹ Hearing about the burglary she expresses her deep concern for the safety of her hero and by her actions she proves the genuineness of her attachment to Charudatta. The magnanimity of the hero is confirmed when Maitreya approaches the heroine with the *ratnavali*, the jewel necklace, in lieu of the stolen ornaments, and the heroine takes no time to confess that it is for this that she loves Charudatta.²² She makes up her mind to offer herself to Charudatta. Undaunted by the approaching thunder-storm she leaves for the house of the hero.²³ This act is just a preparation for the future events to carry the drama to its final stage and can hardly be done away with.

The consummation of the love takes place in the fifth act and the drama is set to run into its most eventful course.

It is evident from the above analysis that the four acts, II to V as marked by Ryder, are neither unnecessary nor superfluous but very much helpful for the development of the main plot. With the scenic arrangements, skilful treatment, enjoyable dialogue and situations enriched by excellent wit and humour these acts are indeed attractive and 'we can ill afford to drop'²⁴ them. The acts in the drama of Shudraka have been described as interrelated like the branches of a big tree. 'The relation is not that of a pedestal to its statue, it is that of a growing organism : from the trunk springs the many branches with their surprisingly abundant foliage.'²⁵

Shudraka's creation of scenes and situations have been really superb in general, but we may point out cases in the construction of the play which can not be considered natural and reasonable in their

21. *Mricchakatika* IV, o. 32

22. *Mricchakatika* IV. 32. 15

23. *Mricchakatika* IV. 33

24. Karmarkar (Edn), *Mricchakatika* xvii

25. H.G. Wells, *The Classical Drama of India*, p. 133

happenings. These cases perhaps go against the otherwise naturalness of the sequence of events or actions and movements of characters in the drama. At the end of the first act Charudatta offers to escort Vasantasena to her place and immediately we find Charudatta asking Vasantasena to enter her house! Next moment Charudatta is seen back to her own house. It is perhaps possible to accommodate such movements with a special scenic arrangements as indicated before, but the readers or spectators are perhaps to be left to imagination that the distance between the two houses has been covered in the meantime! In the second act Samvahaka leaves the scene determined to become a Buddhist monk, and the next moment we are told that Karnapuraka has saved a Buddhist monk from sure death. We immediately understand that this monk is no other than Samvahaka who, however, has not been allowed even the minimum time to prepare himself with the necessaries of the life of a monk! In the third act Maitreya and Charudatta come to the conclusion that since Charudatta's poverty is well-known in Ujjayini, the boring of the hole could only be done by either a stranger or by an apprentice in the trade.²⁶ But it has been a person of Sharvilaka's stature who is able to organise a revolution against the king and overthrows him. It is not possible to expect that Sharvilaka is ignorant of the location of the house of Charudatta or of the wealth that might be in store there! In the description of Vasantasena's mansion in the fourth act such numerous and varied things have been put together that it is difficult to conceive of a Stage which could possibly accommodate all this! A rather tedious and conventional description²⁷ of the rainy day is found in the fifth act and at the same time the dramatist does not seem to have been careful in selecting his objects of description. From the statement of Vasantasena it is evident that she is proceeding towards the place of Charudatta in the evening. She says that 'the stars have disappeared', but swans, flying cranes, and even a rainbow are described to have been visible at the time.²⁸ We find the Sun and the moon referred to be there at the same time!²⁹ Poeticians like Bhamaha, Mammata have noted such absurdities in the descriptions of poets, and justifications for such absurdities are offered that poets in the flight of their imagination are

26 *Mricchakatika* III.22.3 ; III.23

27. *Mricchakatika* V.13 ff.

28. *loc.cit.*

29. *loc. cit*

not fettered by any law of nature. In the case of Shudraka, however, who is otherwise so practical and careful in his observations, it is difficult to expect such things to occur. It is again difficult to explain why Aryaka starting later after the exchange of carts reaches earlier than Vasantasena who leaves earlier from the same place to reach the same garden! We have to remember that Aryaka has even an encounter on the way. Should we imagine that the man of Charudatta has taken a shorter route after his experience with king's officials, as also that as a loyal servant he was anxious to reach his master at the earliest with Vasantasena in the cart! It is perhaps also to be imagined that the cart-driver of Shakara is an easy-going man of an easy-going master and does not find any occasion to hurry about. In the trial scene both Charudatta and Maitreya are surprisingly silent about the source of the ornaments. We see Maitreya asking his friend to tell the court the source of the ornaments, but why the situation is not explained by either of them is not clear. It is possible that Charudatta is silent lest the whereabouts of Aryaka would be known through cross-examinations during the legal procedure.

In a balanced, action-packed, well conceived and well executed composition these inconsistencies are noticeable, if they can be considered as such.

The drama has a sub-plot which centres round a political revolution resulting in the removal of the tyrant king Palaka and installation of Aryaka as a people's man on the throne. Very skilfully has Shudraka made the sub-plot merge in the main plot and hardly does it detract our attention to disturb the advancement of the main theme. The revolution works underground and the results are known only at the end,—the sub-plot has thus never overshadowed the main plot. The two plots end simultaneously with the hero of the play back to his graceful and dignified position and the hero of the revolutionaries occupying the throne. The fortunes of the hero and the heroine have been intelligently knit together with those of the revolutionaries. The two plots have also been connected intimately with one another through some major and minor characters and some significant situations. Of the characters of the sub-plot Sharvilaka, the leader, Chandanaka and the *Vita*, a gay-attendant, of Shakara essentially belong to the main story. Aryaka, the hero of the sub-plot, joins the main stream as soon as he slips into the cart of Charudatta and the hero of the sub-plot meets the hero of the main plot. Darduraka, a gambler, saves

Samvahaka to get the advantage of rescuing Vasantasena for the vital scene in the last act, is also reported to have joined the revolutionaries bringing again the two plots together. However small he has a significant role in turning a tragic event to a happy end. Sharvilaka is the leader of the revolutionaries in the sub-plot and also has a key role to play in the development of the story of the drama. As the result of his burglary Charudatta has to send the jewel necklace to Vasantasena in recompense and she is prompted by that to visit the hero at his place. This incident of her visit leads to the most fateful events of the change of carts and the deposit of ornaments in the clay cart of the son of the hero! We can not miss the skilful treatment of the dramatist in making the two heroes involved in a chain of actions for the final stage. The revolution has not only provided the drama with an effective and colourful background but without it certain important and necessary incidents would have become difficult to happen. It could be possible to introduce the fateful event of the exchange of carts by any other dramatic device but the inspection of the cart to find out Aryaka by the police officials could only be effected with the revolution at the background. This inspection has played a vital role in turning the table against the hero in the trial scene. One of the inspecting officials informs the Court, that, as announced by the cartman Vasantasena was going in the cart to meet Charudatta in the garden where she has been reported to be found dead. The evidence goes clearly against Charudatta and the revolutionary episode contributes most to it. Right at the beginning of the drama we find the Stage Manager (*sutrādhara*) refers to the tyrant king and from there till the end the revolution forms the sub-plot running undercurrent, and the two plots attain a common denouement with the success of the revolution and the union of the hero and the heroine as well as with their near and dear ones. From any point of view the sub-plot or for that matter, the revolution is not superfluous, irrelevant or unnecessary, rather it adds to the suspense and attractiveness of the play as a whole,—the revolution operates silently but loud in its effects at the end!

Unity of time, place and action has been observed in the drama in a general sense. The incidents have all taken place in and around Ujjayini. According to the principles of dramaturgy³⁰ an act of a dramatic composition should contain the incidents of one day only, and any

30. *Sahitya Darpana VI*

necessary incident not taking place within the limit of a day should be communicated by an interlude or by a following act to maintain the turn of events. The interlude should also not depict events covering more than a year's time. By and large Shudraka's composition does not take up events of more than a day for an act, nor does it depict events in an act separated from one another by a larger period of time. As we have noted already that Shudraka does not employ here any interlude but he has shown a remarkable dramatic skill in not disturbing the sequence of events, and even in the absence of the interludes his readers or spectators do not find the least difficulty in following the development of the story. In the eventful acts, sometimes in a tense situation, the scenes move with a speed not experienced before in a Sanskrit drama.

Shudraka has earned wide fame as a dramatist for having displayed three admirable qualities,—his variety, his superb skill in characterization, and last but not the least his humour. All these qualities will be discussed in the sections following.

The Mricchakatika has indeed perpetuated the name of Shudraka. 'His clay monument will survive those of bronze, a brittle child's toy will be his imperishable deed. Thrones and empires go to pieces like all earthly things, but king Shudraka's claycart will always be there firm as rock'.³¹

(A) VARIETY IN SHUDRAKA'S DRAMA

We have noted above that Shudraka has been given a place of honour for his three qualities exhibited richly in the *Mricchakatika*,—'his variety, his skill in the drawing of character, his humour'.³² An analysis of the ten acts with diverse scenes will bring out Shudraka's capacity in creating a variety of incidents with quick-changing suspenseful scenes which 'take place close upon one another almost at a break-neck speed'.³³ Action-packed scenes of varying nature have been welded together forming composite acts and the theme develops in a natural way. It is known that scenes in a Sanskrit drama have no division in the respective acts but in Shudraka's drama we get acts representing clear series of scenes.

31. N.K. Chattopadhyay, *Mricchakatika-A Study* (Reprint Edn.), p. 5

32. Ryder, *ibid.* xvii

33. *loc. cit.*

After the Prologue, we find the opening scene of the drama set in the house of the hero who is represented as appearing in the scene from his inner apartment. Sad and dejected the hero is greeted by Maitreya, his all-time friend, who appears from outside with a jasmine-scented mantle sent for the hero by his friend Jirnavridha. This mantle has been introduced here to play a significant role in the development of the theme of love between the hero and the heroine. Having shown some traits of nobility of the hero's nature the scene inside the house is suspended with Charudatta asking his friend to wait till he performs meditation. This scene being off, the second scene is laid outside on the highway where we find the heroine hotly chased by Samsthanaka, the knave known as Shakara, and his associates. The gay-attendant of Shakara, a parasite by living, is surprised at the attitude of Vasantasena, the heroine, a courtesan by profession, that she is running away from a royal person. It appears to him contrary to her professional stand,³⁴ but when he learns that Vasantasena loves Charudatta the parasite *Vita* appreciates her choice.³⁵ Shakara is aware of Vasantasena's attachment for Charudatta and cautions his associates that the house of the poor Charudatta is near by and they should be careful to see that she is not able to get into the house of Charudatta. It is darkness all over and Shakara in an act of foolishness indicates to his associates the location of Charudatta's house. Having known Vasantasena's inclination towards Charudatta the *Vita* advises her covertly to put off her garlands and ornaments so that she is not detected by the smell of the flowers or by the tinkling sound of the ornaments.³⁶ Taking the clue from Shakara's direction he guides Vasantasena³⁷ to slip into the house of Charudatta. The first scene which has remained so long suspended comes into play at this stage as the third scene by turn to bring the heroine nearer to the hero. Practically a continuation of the first scene it presents Maitreya, accompanied by Radanika with a lamp in hand, about to go out for offering oblations to the goddesses after Charudatta has done his meditation. Vasantasena who has been waiting just at the doors hoping for an opportunity to get inside enters into the house as soon as Maitreya opens the door. As if by a gush of wind the lamp is extinguished by Vasantasena and none realises what has actually

34. *Mricchakatika* I. 30. 30

35. *Mricchakatika* I. 32. 9

36. *Mricchukatiku* I. 35

37. *Mricchukatiku* I. 35. 3

happened! Maitreya goes back inside to relight the lamp keeping Radanika at the darkened doors outside. While searching for Vasantasena Shakara and party reach the spot where Radanika is standing alone, and in the darkness Shakara takes her to be Vasantasena and seizes her by the hair³⁸. On return with the lamp Maitreya is infuriated at the condition of Radanika and a heated exchange of words takes place between him and a disappointed Shakara. The knave discovers the truth that Vasantasena has got a shelter with Charudatta and wants Maitreya to deliver his ultimatum to Charudatta, that if he does not hand over Vasantasena to him he would have to face an enmity terminating in death only.³⁹ The next scene is arranged within the house where Vasantasena in darkness is addressed by Charudatta as Radanika. He throws his mantle to her and advises her to take his son to the inner apartment by wrapping him up with the mantle. This is the same jasmine-scented mantle received by the hero in the first scene. Coming into contact with the fragrant mantle Vasantasena realises that her hero is not that indifferent to the charms of youth.⁴⁰ This feeling excites her love-longing inasmuch as she has not been sure till now if her hero, reduced to absolute poverty, has any attachment for youthful pleasures. Convinced of the hero's favourable reaction she takes advantage of the darkness to cover herself with the mantle that has the fortune of having a contact with the hero's body, and she does it without being observed by others⁴¹. When Maitreya tells his friend that the lady standing in front of him in the darkness is not Radanika but Vasantasena who has been attracted towards him since she saw him in the temple of Kamadeva, Vasantasena requests Charudatta to keep her ornaments in his custody. She offers a very reasonable ground for this request that a lady with ornaments may have to face danger on the streets at night. Charudatta escorts her to her place and the act ends here.

The four scenes in the act have clear demarcations but have been interwoven carefully to be presented as a running act with fast development. We have the first scene in the house of the hero with the second having events in the streets, the third one is laid practically at the gate of the hero's house and the last i.e., the fourth in the sequence extends from the house of the hero to that of the heroine. Important

38. *Mricchakatika* I. 38. 29

39. *Mricchakatika* I. 50. 30

40. *Mricchakatika* I. 52. 15

41. *Mricchakatika* I. 52. 18

developments result from the two small incidents of the jasmine-scented mantle and the deposit of the ornaments since the event controls the turn of events leading to the final scene.

The Second Act opens with the heroine deeply absorbed in the thoughts of the hero and in her conversation with her maid Madanika. She discloses herself that the ornaments have been deposited with Charudatta to have an opportunity to re-visit her hero. In the next scene on the streets Samvahaka (a masseur) is hotly chased by two fellow gamblers and after some interesting actions Samvahaka escapes to the house of Vasantasena. The opening scene appeared to be a detached one so long, but with the entry of the masseur the two scenes are joined and the third scene is enacted in the house of Vasantasena. It comes out that Samvahaka was the masseur of Charudatta who having fallen on evil days has relieved him of his job. Having joined the gamblers group he is now in trouble with a bond. Vasantasena promptly frees the masseur from his bond and asks him to go back to his job with Charudatta. Samvahaka leaves the scene informing Vasantasena that he is determined to turn a monk and requests her to remember him as such.⁴² At this stage is set in the third scene with the episode of Karnapuraka. We know that Vasantasena's attendant Karnapuraka has saved the life of a monk and has received a mantle from a generous onlooker in appreciation of his commendable feat.⁴³ Vasantasena comes to know that the name of Charudatta appears on the mantle which is jasmine-scented as well.⁴⁴ The attendant advises Karnapuraka to offer the mantle to their Madam which Karnapuraka does. Madam accepts it and rewards Karnapuraka for his valour and courage. Vasantasena wraps herself up with the mantle and goes to the balcony to watch her hero passing by that way.

The four scenes in the act have been put in and around the house of the heroine. The scenes contribute much to the deepening of the attachment of the heroine for the hero through her talks with Karnapuraka and also with Samvahaka, both of whom furnish direct and impartial evidences about the nobility of the hero. Samvahaka has to play again an important role in bringing about the union of the hero and the heroine.

42. *Mricchakatika* II 16. 26

43. *Mricchakatika* II. 20. 6

44. *Mricchakatika* II 20. 11

Four main scenes with some short intervening scenes comprise the Third Act which mainly presents the episode of Sharvilaka. The first two scenes exhibit the noble soul of Charudatta.⁴⁵ There are some interesting sketches on the art of burglary in a short scene, and in the following scene laid in the bedroom of Charudatta a burglary is committed by Sharvilaka. The scene is interesting and enjoyable. The case is detected by Radanika, and Charudatta is at his wit's end to learn that the burglar has gone away with the deposited ornaments of Vasantasena. Though he does not know exactly how he should proceed to recompense, he is determined to make amends for the lost property of Vasantasena. In a short intervening scene we see Dhuta, the wife of Charudatta, coming forward to offer a jewel-necklace, her only possession now, to make up for the loss of the trust. So that his integrity is not doubted Charudatta asks his friend Mitreya to take the necklace to Vasantasena with the false report that the ornaments of Vasantasena have been lost in gambling by Charudatta and the necklace is being offered in lieu of that.

The scenes have been created in a way to project the noble character of the hero as well as to help in the development of the theme. The result of the burglary goes a long way to help the course of the drama and it has been set with a good amount of reasonableness. Sharvilaka has to get money at any cost and he employs his knowledge in the art of burglary. We have to assume that the location of Charudatta's house is not known to him and he is allured by the big mansion. How does Charudatta dare keeping a trust in the outer part of an old building is a question! Perhaps it was not possible for him to get the ornaments of a courtesan in the inner apartment for a safer custody, and that a burglary could be committed in the house of a known poor man like him did not occur to Charudatta.

The Fourth Act opens with Vasantasena gazing on a picture board and then conversing with Madanika in her room. In a short scene Sharvilaka is introduced to explain to his ladylove Madanika how with a rash deed he has procured the ransom for her release. Next we learn about the release of Madanika against ornaments stolen from the house of Charudatta. Advised by Madanika Sharvilaka falsely reports that the ornaments have been sent by Charudatta back to the owner. Vasantasena enjoys the situation as she has heard from behind the

45. *Mricchakatika* III. 1. ff

incident of the burglary from the dialogue between Madanika and Sharvilaka. she releases Madanika happily with the remark that she acts in the way she has been instructed by Charudatta himself⁴⁶! As soon as the couple make an exit from the scene an announcement is heard that Sharvilaka's friend Aryaka has been imprisoned by king Palaka. Sharvilaka takes no time to decide to go and try for his friend's release, and sends Madanika to a friend's house.⁴⁷ Just at this stage enters Maitreya with the jewel-necklace and offers it to Vasantasena with the false report we have known already. Vasantasena now knows the full story about her trust as well as the burglary but does not give any indication about it and accepts the necklace as if in lieu of her ornaments. Events in the scenes have been presented in an excellent manner and we enjoy these along with Vasantasena! Vasantasena sends the message to Charudatta, the gambler, that she will visit him. A storm is about to burst but the heroine starts for the hero undaunted! The storm is perhaps indicative of the calamity to befall both the heroine and the hero! In an intervening scene we have rather a boring and somewhat long description of the chambers of the mansion of Vasantasena as observed by Maitreya on his way to meet Vasantasena for making the recompense. The descriptive passages bring out a large number of things which may prove tedious, nevertheless these are tinged with Shudraka's characteristic humour in a way to be made enjoyable at places.⁴⁷

In the Fifth Act takes place the consummation of the love of the hero and the heroine, a hint to which has already been given in the last scene of the fourth act.⁴⁸ Though poetic some long and tedious descriptions of rains and phenomena here check the easy and attractive flow of the course of the theme we have so long been acquainted with. Though we have some specimens of enjoyable humour here the act does not offer us a favourable impression.

The Sixth Act begins where the fifth ends. The act is remarkable for its construction and we have several important scenes of far-reaching consequences. Vasantasena consoles the son of the hero by filling his clay cart with ornaments from her body, and this very nearly costs the hero his life! The fateful interchange of carts has been effected with all the force of a natural happening and the drama gets rapidly

46. *Mricchakatika* IV, 21. 27

47. *Mricchakatika* IV, 27. 9 ff.

48. *op. cit.*

towards the occurrences in acts VIII to X as if in a chain of logical sequences! The scenes move so fast and with so much tension that they give the readers or the spectators little time to stop and think about the events and their consequences. As already discussed we can not but remember a possible inconsistency in the act that Aryaka starts later to reach earlier than Vasantasena. The dramatic device of the interchange of carts has been so skilfully handled that the drama leads towards its tragic possibility in a natural way.

Aryaka, the hero of the sub-plot, meets the hero of the main action in the Seventh Act which is the shortest in the play. This accidental meeting between the two characters establishes a friendship between the two and Aryaka is helped by Charudatta to flee the country by his cart. The situation has been created so realistically that we do not feel for a moment that our hero thus becomes a party to the political network of Ujjayini which is to bring about a change in the ruler of the State. We know from the beginning of the sixth act that Charudatta has employed his cart to bring Vasantasena to the garden, but because of the interchange of carts comes Aryaka instead! Charudatta and Maitreya now prepares to return from the garden but they are made not to use the direct path to avoid the unproductive sight of a Buddhist monk.⁴⁹ It has been so set by Shudraka purposefully since he does not want his hero to meet the monk who is no other than his former masseur Samvahaka. A meeting between the two at this point would have taken the course of the play to a different development and it would have been difficult to take it towards the desired end! It has been certainly the stroke of a master to create the situation as such.

The Eighth Act is the direct outcome of the events occurring in the sixth act. Shudraka's treatment in this act speaks of his capacity in creating humour even in tense situations and his ability in probing deep into human nature and emotions. He raises his heroine above any reproach in so far as her faithfulness to Charudatta is concerned, and at the same time the vanity and cunning shrewdness of Shakara are brought out to the fullest extent. The strangulation of Vasantasena takes place in this act and her unconscious body is covered by the rascal under fallen leaves. The act foreshadows the future events and the scope for the revival of Vasantasena to life has been preserved. The reference to the corpse of a woman is made in an intelligent way

49. *Mricchakatika* VII. 9.1

to be utilised in the court-scene. The scenes here run in an uninterrupted way and keep the readers or spectators much anxious throughout.

In the Ninth Act Shakara lodges a complaint against Charudatta as the murderer of Vasantasena. In the beginning of the legal procedure there is no direct evidence to involve Charudatta with the murder but the evidence of Viraka that Vasantasena went to meet Charudatta in his cart comes out to be most important in the prosecution. The female corpse referred to in the eighth act is brought into action here when Viraka reports that the half-mangled body of a woman is found in the garden! The corpse is taken to be that of Vasantasena and that establishes the guilt of Charudatta. As the last straw on the camel's back is revealed Vasantasena's ornaments from the person of Maitreya furnishing the Court with Charudatta's motive behind the murder! These are the very ornaments Vasantasena presented to console the little son of Charudatta who later asked his friend to take them back to Vasantasena. But strangely enough neither Maitreya nor Charudatta disclose the truth about the source of the receipt of the ornaments⁵⁰. The hero is mortified that he could be charged with such a crime, and in utter despair he owns the crime indirectly. He has lost all meaning to live in a world devoid of Vasantasena!⁵¹ The Court recommends exile for the murderer but the king orders to impale him in the dreadful southern cemetery! The act is action-packed and through several scenes welded skilfully it runs in a natural course through tense and suspenseful situations. The legal procedure of the time is also vindicated along with the royal control over it.

The Tenth and the last Act commences with the Executioners taking the hero in a procession to the southern cemetery. It seems the whole of Ujjayini is on the streets with their hearts visibly swamped in compassion for the hero. With a twist of his technical skill Shudraka makes the servant of Shakara appear in the scene to proclaim the innocence of Charudatta in the murder and at the same time charging his master for the heinous crime. We heave a sigh of relief expecting that Charudatta is going to be saved! The crafty Shakara is shrewd enough for the servant Sthavaraka to counteract the charge against him and very ably turns the table against the poor man. The last ray of hope for saving Charudatta is lost and the executioners are about to

50. See *supra*

51. *Mucchakanka IX. 37.1*

carry out the order of the king. While the Shakara gets impatient for the final stroke the sympathetic executioners delay on one plea or the other with hopes that a man like Charudatta might have a miraculous save even at that stage! The whole setting is extremely tense and suspenseful when Vasantasena herself appears in the scene accompanied by Samvahaka turned a monk! The incident for Shakara is a bolt from the blue and for the hero it is a miraculous and unthought of escape from a certain death! What could be more pleasing to the whole mass of people, but the drama does not end here. Swiftly does the scene move to the spot where Dhuta, the wife of Charudatta, is about to sacrifice her life in fire so that she does not have to listen to the death of her husband. She is saved in the nick of time. We learn that the revolution led by Sharvilaka has been successful killing Palaka, the tyrant, and installing Aryaka instead. The new king confers on Vasantasena the status of a lawfully wedded wife and Charudatta is made the ruler of an area. In conformity with his nobility and large-heartedness the hero pardons Shakara when everybody wants his destruction!

The last act is a fitting finale to the main theme and the technical skill and dramatic art of Shudraka are manifest here in a large measure. The scene of Dhuta in the last stage has been sometime thought as an intruder and is said to have been introduced by one Nilakantha to remove a lacuna felt by him. The tradition of Nilakantha has no wide acknowledgment nor do we feel that the scene is unnecessary or unbecoming of the genius of our dramatist. Rather the scene has added a tension or suspense to the whole framework investing the act with much suspense and attractiveness.

The variety of incidents and the fast moving scenes have endowed the drama an unstereotyped, unconventional and a changed but refreshing atmosphere so different from Sanskrit dramas in general.

As we have seen already the drama moves simultancously with two plots, the sub-plot being undercurrent right from the beginning. It is not uncommon that in such cases dramatists fail to maintain proper proportion in the treatment of the two plots with the proneness of the one to overshadow the other. In this respect the *Mricchakatika* is perhaps perfect in its construction⁵². Shudaraka seems to have never lost sight of his main theme, the love of the heroine for the hero and

52. See *supra*

her winning the coveted title of 'legally wedded wife'. Sharvilaka's revolution forming the sub-plot brings about the happy end with numerous ups and downs in the fulfilment of the heroine's cherished end. Shudraka has exhibited his extraordinary dramatic and technical skill in knitting the fortunes of the hero and the heroine with those of the revolutionaries, and the drama has been a compact, composite and a balanced composition from any point of view.

(B) SHUDRAKA'S SKILL IN CHARACTERISATION

In keeping with the theme of his composition, the earthly love of common men and women, Shudraka has drawn on different strata of the society for his characters. his men and women do not belong to any particular social order nor do they profess any religious outlook or idealist sentiment. The composition is a tale centering round the common people who by their actions and way of life have established new norms or values of life. though diversified the characters have been endowed with individual features of likes and dislikes, their vices and virtues. Their human qualities make them appear soft and the grim realities of life have prepared them to face any situation in life with courage and determination. Ryder finds his men 'better individualised than his women'⁵³ and in the opinion of Sylvain Levi the characters of Shudraka 'who take part in the action bears a particular mark, a special trait which characterizes him'.⁵⁴ Shudraka has shown an admirable skill in mixing up the characters and situations 'where the characters appear to have been cut of the situations'.⁵⁵ Shudraka has not only portrayed his characters as very much human in flesh and blood, but has made them appear as 'cosmopolitan' in their bearings 'inasmuch as these personages can be found living in any society without any affiliation to any particular social creed or religious sentiment'.⁵⁶

His skill in the drawing of characters is more powerful and varied than we find in any Sanskrit drama 'and it is perhaps for this *one* quality that Shudraka's drama has received brilliant encomiums from oriental as well as occidental critics'.⁵⁷ This power of characterization has been noted by Ryder as a dramatist of excellence. He is a towering

53. Ryder, *ibid* xix

54. See Kale, *ibid* intro. 53

55. B. Banerjee, King Sudraka and his Drama, p.

56. *op. cit.* p. 64

57. *op. cit.* p. 63

personality in respect of characterization, but he attracts out appreciation most for his sympathetic treatment of even the so-called minor characters of a drama. He has not neglected or left out any character from the scope of his careful treatment and the result is that each of them has contributed to the success of his drama. He has given the same meticulous attention to all his characters irrespective of the extent of the role a particular character has to cover in the drama. His small characters if they can be called minors are no less important than the bigger or major roles. With equal care, sympathy and attention he has drawn his men and women in the drama, whether he is the hero, a poor but noble Brahmin, or the courtesan-heroine with noble aspirations, or the low-born slaves, or the gamblers taking care of their loss and profit, or the slave girls having exemplary loyalty, or the cautious and sentimental police officer, or the attendant to the Court, or the Judge as the protector of law, or an all-time friend like Maitreya,—no character has been overlooked. Even the crowd in the last act have been presented in a meaningful way! Though Shudraka has created a large number of characters his Shakara should be considered his greatest achievement in this respect.

Shudraka has so skilfully endowed his characters with traits of individualism that they appear as living men and women. His power of depicting and developing the characters deserve our admiring appreciation. His experience of men and women in the society, his keen power of observation, and above all his humanism have invested him with the rare gift of creating not only such a large variety of impressive characters but who have also the relevance and necessity to remain in the drama by their merits. Most of his characters have suffered hard knocks in life, still they show the grit and determination to raise themselves above the unfortunate situations. Even the executioners, placed lowly in the society, speak of the inscrutable ways of destiny and hold out hopes for men⁵⁸: the sun and the moon located so high in the sky undergo privations, what then about the common man on the earth! It is the law of the world that the one rising up falls down and the other fallen rises up again.

An examination of the activities of the personages created by Shudraka may well convince us of his great skill in characterisation and also the richness in the variety of men and women presented in

58. *Mricchakatika*, X. 35. II

the drama. We may start with the hero and end with the crowd as drawn by Shudraka.

(i) *Charudatta* is the hero of the drama. A Brahmin by birth but a tradesman by profession the hero is poor and handsome with a benevolent nature. He lives in Ujjayini and has decorated his city by constructing parks, tanks, convents, temples etc.⁵⁹ His charity and benevolence have rendered him to absolute poverty. Even the companion of his arch-enemy pays him a glowing tribute as 'the wishfulfilling tree bent down by fruits in the form of virtues for the poor!,⁶⁰ and points to him as worthy of respect having the claim as truly living while others in the world are simply letting off breath!'.⁶¹ He is the hero of deep and calm (*dhira-prashanta*) type⁶² possessed of courteous and liberal spirit. He has never received a happy message empty-handed⁶³ and his poverty or possessionless-ness can not damp his spirit of munificence as we see him searching his own person to get an ornament to be presented to Karnapuraka for his commendable feat⁶⁴. His pleasing appearance is an object of appreciation for all. Even a woman of the category of Vasantasena's mother with all her experiences of life can not but observe: My daughter has well done to bestow her youth on him!⁶⁵ We find even the Judge in the law-court to appreciate his physical charms and observe: With such excellent form one can never abandon a befitting conduct'⁶⁶. He upholds the truth at any cost, and weighs his dignity more than anything else. He does not agree with his friend Maitreya to disown the deposit of ornaments after the burglary, and decides to send the jewel-necklace in lieu of the stolen ornaments. He is prepared even to beg for the recompense money but will not tell a lie. He would not have to pay anything for the stolen articles according to the current practice but here he has recourse to a sort of white lie by sending a false report to Vasantasena that the deposit has been lost in gambling and the jewel-necklace is being sent to make amends for her loss. He knows it well that a statement of fact in such a case would not be believed by the people

59. IX. 30. 9

60. *Mricchakatika* I. 48

61. *loc. cit.*

62. Cf. *Dasharupaka*, II. 3-4

63. *Mricchakatika*, V. II. 88

64. *See supra*

65. *Mricchakatika* IX. 17. 17

66. *Mricchakatika* IX. 16.

and would lead to many gossips affecting his dignity : one in poverty can not have any dignity in this world and is suspected to be capable of committing any crime.⁶⁷ Imputing a crime to Charudatta is considered by the Judge to be as impossible as 'the weighing of the Himalayas', or as unthinkable as 'the crossing of the ocean', or 'the grasping of the wind'.⁶⁸ The Executioners who form the lowest class of people in the society even show their high appreciation for his qualities and activities. To them Charudatta is 'the store of gems', or like a bridge for the good people to tide over their difficulties'.⁶⁹ They even urge upon the assembled crowd to leave the place since the death of a noble man is one of the four things ought not to be seen.⁷⁰ He is a considerate and affectionate master as his servant thinks him to be in the third act and we see his tender and compassionate mind revealed when he does not want his sleeping servant to be awakened,⁷¹ as also in his preventing Maitreya from disturbing the happy pair of pigeons: Let the poor pigeon stay undisturbed with his mate.⁷² He is of such soft nature and mild temperament that he does not collect flowers from creepers lest the leaves are injured. Madanika is confident that Charudatta can not take Sharvilaka to a law-court if his identity is known as the burglar, she knows that 'heat does not come out of moon'.⁷³ The hero shows his grace and magnanimity by helping Aryaka to flee the country in his cart. He is conscious of his responsibility in acting against the State, but 'he is prepared to abandon his life but not the one who has asked for protection'.⁷⁴ The servant of the Shakara is certainly not a beneficiary of our hero but he even risks his life in a desperate attempt to save Charudatta, 'the shelter of noble men' His moral strength and indomitable spirit give him the support to ignore the Shakara and his threats.

Sad and dejected the hero appears in the opening scene wailing for his poverty, but it is not for the loss of his wealth but for the inability on his part to help suitors as the result! He is pained at the attitude of friends and relatives who do not visit him because of his poverty. He

67. *Mricchakatika* III. 24

68. *Mricchakatika* IX. 20

69. *Mricchakatika* X. 14

70. *Mricchakatika* X. 7

71. *Mricchakatika* III. 6. 11

72. *Mricchakatika* V. 11. 21

73. *Mricchakatika* IV. 19. 5

74. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 6

considers poverty as the sixth great sin and as the abode of all sufferings. But one must not miss the point that even his grief over his poverty-stricken condition 'does not project him as a person craving for money but exhibits him as a true human being with a large compassionate heart...'⁷⁵ He is unable to restrain himself to make charity whenever an occasion demands it of him, and he hands over to the deserving person whatever small things he has.⁷⁶

He is a man of culture and the third act projects him not only as a keen lover of music but also as one conversant with the science of music.

With his nobility, his munificence, truthfulness, honesty and dignity and as the one held in the highest esteem the hero has been a lovable character in this love-drama. The very fact that a rich courtesan and a beauty-queen like Vasantasena gets so deeply attached to a poor man like the hero speaks a lot about the attainments and lovability of Charudatta. We are struck by the fact that unlike other dramas the hero is here the hunted as we see the heroine to do all the love-making and the hero is not that active in this matter as one would have expected him to be! It is perhaps his poverty that makes him hesitant in reciprocating boldly the love of the heroine, and on this point Ryder is of the opinion that Charudatta is not fit to be the hero of a love-drama like the present one.⁷⁷ In our estimate, however, we do not find any inconsistency in making Charudatta the hero. We have to remember that Charudatta is a hero of the deep-calm type⁷⁸ and as such we can not expect him to be either frivolous or adventurous; true to his class he is cautious, considerate and at the same time responsive. Understandably he is hesitant in love-making with a rich courtesan, he is always aware of his constraints in the matter.⁷⁹ The dramatist has carefully exhibited his hero's qualities steadily and step by step with a view to creating in the heroine a strong fascination for the hero. The character of Charudatta has been drawn in such a remarkable way that without any initial attempt in the love-making he has been the central figure in the affair and it is clear that he has established himself as a true lover. With consistent effort from the beginning Shudraka has

75. B. Banerjee, *ibid.* p. 68

76. Cf. *Mricchakatika* II. 20. 6

77. *op. cit.*

78. See *supra*

79. *Mricchakatika* I. 55

established his hero believably and raises him to a glorious plane in the last scene when among other things the hero shows a rare magnanimity not only by forgiving his sworn enemy, the Shakara, but also allowing him to retain all his rights and privileges!

He shows his dignity when in spite of the sympathy of the Judge he does not make any effort to divulge the secrets about the ornaments falling from the person of Maitreya. It is possible that he has restrained himself for the sake of Aryaka's safety⁸⁰ but he might have worked under the idea that his statement of facts would be of no avail because the king's brother-in-law is his sworn enemy and he would only invite ridicule in the process. That a charge of murdering a woman has been brought against him is sufficient to stain his character and he does not want to make him-self cheaper by any deposition to save himself! We notice an element of pride or vanity in his statement⁸¹ that even his wife shows him mercy, when Dhuta sends the Jewel-necklace to compensate for the trust. Is he always to give and not to take anything in from anybody! On the question of his good name and pure character he can not compromise, nor has he any fear or dejection in mind to face death, but the public censure that he has killed a woman burns him only.⁸²

Undoubtedly Shudraka has created his hero as a remarkable personality who is noble, benevolent and particularly true to the qualities of the class of hero to which he belongs. He possesses such an attractiveness in his character and temperament that the beauty-queen of Ujjayini who is a public-woman by profession cannot but have a strong fascination for him.

Shudraka's skilful depiction of Charudatta presents before us a great hero of a unique drama, but in spite of all his virtues and likeable nature how can we support his attachment for a courtesan! A family man as he is with a faithful wife and an innocent small child he does not seem to be conscious or responsible enough when he decides that 'separated from Vasantasena there is no purpose in life left'⁸³ Keeping the company of a courtesan might have been a fashionable practice of the day, as the hero himself affirms that his character can not be polluted by such an association,⁸⁴ but we can not perhaps justify his attitude

80. See *supra*

81. *Mricchakatika* III. 26. 50

82. *Mricchakatika* X. 33

83. *Mricchakatika* IX. 37.1

84. *Mricchakatika* IX. 17.5

towards his family. He fully appreciates the generosity of his wife⁸⁵ and is anxious about the welfare of his son,⁸⁶ nevertheless Vasantasena seems to have been weighed more than his duty and responsibility towards the family. It is possible that the dramatist liked to portray his hero as a natural human being of flesh and blood who cannot fail to respond to the sincerest offer of love by a woman of appreciable conduct. Be that as it may the hero of Shudraka certainly wins our admiration and appreciation for all his qualities of head and heart.

Shudraka's characterization and presentation of his hero are distinguishable from Bhasa, Kalidasa or Bhavabhuti's portrayal of their respective heroes. Shudraka's hero is a man of this world who by his indomitable spirit and exemplary qualities 'withstands all the vicissitudes of life, all the tidal waves that toss him up and down in this ocean of life, whereas the divine or semi-divine heroes of other dramatists beget help from divine forces, or some supernatural elements come to their assistance in times of dire necessity'⁸⁷ It will not be any exaggeration to say that Shudraka's Charudatta is the only hero of a Sanskrit drama who has won the fight of life against heavy odds all by himself.

(ii) *Vasantasena*, the rich courtesan of Ujjayini, is certainly the heroine of Shudraka's drama. Sanskrit dramaturgy prescribes three types of heroine, viz., a legal and loyal wife of the hero, not a married wife but deeply attached to the hero, and a celestial nymph like *Urvasi* or a common woman. Our heroine belongs to the third category. *Vasantasena* is a *ganika* or a public woman but she makes so much impression that she may be said to have stood apart from other heroines of Sanskrit dramas. *Sita* and *Shakuntala* are ideal characters worthy of our reverence and they have qualities which our women-folk should emulate, but that a courtesan like *Vasantasena* evokes our admiration and appreciation speaks a lot in her favour as a heroine. It is but natural to expect from *Sita* or *Shakuntala* the self-sacrifice or the spirit of self-denial that we find in them, we do not have any feeling of wonder in their pattern of life because they are noble figures coming out of the pages of our epic or history and expected to behave as such. It is altogether different in the case of *Vasantasena*'s mode of life and behaviour. The most beautiful courtesan of Ujjayini rolling in wealth

85. *Mricchakatika* III. 28

86. *Mricchakatika* X. 17 ff.

87. B. Banerjee, *ibid*, p.71

is refusing a royal suitor of influence offering presents worth ten thousand gold coins and running after a poor Brahmin whose only possessions are his noble qualities which attract love and admiration of all coming into contact. She is following a course of life contrary to her profession and the environments in which she has so long been. Her action and propensities show very much the dignity, discretion and circumspection of an honourable lady of a noble family. She has richly deserved the honour of the title or status of a legally wedded wife, i.e., a housewife, that she has been fortunate to be endowed with by the State towards the end of the play.

A woman of captivating beauty she is like the beauty of spring having charms like the wife of the god of love.⁸⁸ She has been said to be the beauty of the city of Ujjayini⁸⁹ and the associate of Shakara has aptly described her attachment for Charudatta as 'a gem is united with a gem'.⁹⁰

Vasantasena is not a born-heroine like Sita or Shakuntala, but has raised herself above the environments in which she has been born to become a heroine in the real sense. It can be said that she has elevated herself to the honourable state of a heroine by virtue of her great qualities. Her self-restraint and indomitable spirit have made her successful to become a respectable house-wife of a respectable personality. Though belonging to the line of prostitutes through her mother Shudraka does not characterize her as a prostitute herself, but has endowed her with such intrinsic merits by which she fights her way out and establishes herself with dignity and honour. By her strong determination she has found herself out of the ignoble life and the cursed atmosphere. She possesses all the merits and qualities behaving a noble lady in a noble family. The associate of Shakara has aptly described her as the river of noble nature, a resort of distressed people, a river of courtesy etc.⁹¹

Shudraka has put her heroine above all blemishes by making her fallen in love with a poor man like Charudatta so that no body gets a scope to indulge in gossips about her sincerity in love-making. Her love for Charudatta is not only true and sincere but very much like a religion to her. She feels herself honoured when the rascal Shakara

88. Cf. *Mricchakatika* VIII 38. etc

89. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 23

90. *Mricchakatika* I. 32. 9

91. *Mricchakatika* VIII 38

asks her to get down of his cart as she makes his bull to carry her for going to sport with that penniless merchant-son.⁹² She considers the words of Shakara as commendatory when she is accused of being enamoured of the poor man.⁹³ Even when she is throttled mercilessly she has the name of Charudatta on her lips!

Vasantasena possesses everything that her society can give her but she is pining for a noble and dignified life. She does not care for the fabulous offer made by the king's man and even threatens her mother to embrace death if she advocates in favour of the man, and later goes to meet her own man of choice.⁹⁴ She has the mental power to make every effort to win the love of Charudatta so that she can see herself out of the life of affluence and corruption. We can not miss the point that in this play most of the love-making is done by the heroine herself who is a sort of hunter unlike other heroines who are generally the hunted.⁹⁵ She faces heavy odds to achieve her object and even confronts death.

From the very beginning the dramatist has built her up around her sincere love for Charudatta, she believes merit to be the basis of love and not force⁹⁶ as followed by Shakara. Not only has she received indirect reports on Charudatta's nobility or large-heartedness but has got direct reports also as from the masseur or from her own attendant Karnapuraka. When she sees that her man of choice has sent a precious jewel-necklace to recompense her stolen ornaments which Charudatta could easily avoid, the depth of her hero's nobility is revealed and she decides to offer herself to the great soul. She not only tries her best to get away from Shakara but actually kicks him out when the scoundrel abuses her lover in vulgar terms. She is prepared to die with the sacred name of her cherished lord on her lips but does not surrender to the man threatening her to kill if she continues to utter the name of his arch-enemy. She faces the consequence but does not yield.

When she finds herself in the house of Charudatta by accident she has been intelligent enough to take advantage of the situation and keep her chances open for a re-visit. With a sharp presence of mind she

92. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 19. II

93. *Mricchakatika* *loc. cit.*

94. *Mricchakatika* IV. 0. 35 ff

95. See *supra*

96. *Mricchakatika* I. 32. I

offers to keep her ornaments with him on a very natural ground.⁹⁷ When Charudatta hesitates to keep a trust in his old and unsafe building she promptly stops Charudatta with a very important remark worthy of a noble lady. She observes⁹⁸ that 'trust is entrusted to persons and not to houses'. Her confidence in the honesty of Charudatta is shown in this way in the very beginning which is developed slowly but surely through various incidents.

Anything associated with Charudatta is most sacred and adorable to her. Samvahaka gets a right royal reception from her and is freed from the gamblers' bond as soon as she learns that he happened to be the masseur of Charudatta. She exhibits her passionate feeling when she comes into contact with the jasmine scented mantle which Charudatta throws at her unknowingly. she is eager to get the mantle from Karnapuraka which he received from Charudatta as a gift.⁹⁹ Capable of taking a quick but sure decision every time she exhibits her sense of judgment, balance of mind, discriminating intelligence about studying a situation and keen presence of mind. We have ample evidence of these qualities at every step when she is seen in action.

We appreciate very much her idea of love coming as it does from a public woman. Her view on love differs from the general idea since she does not like to marry one who would not be able to return her love. She confesses to her confidante Madanika that she wants to enjoy life in love and has no fascination for a wealthy, influential or erudite person as her partner of life. They are respectable or adorable but she is afraid they can not reciprocate the love she is pining for.¹⁰⁰ She has the worldly motive to love and be loved in a true atmosphere of love. Her choice falls on Charudatta who is poverty-stricken but is known as a noble and benevolent personality much esteemed in Ujjayini. She has given it in clear terms her liking for and her sincerity about the hero. We realise how eager she is to have the life of a house-wife as she congratulates Madanika winning the coveted status.¹⁰¹ Only with a stay for one night she has endeared herself to the members of Charudatta's family.¹⁰² It is a known fact that a public woman is always

97. *Mricchakatika* I. 56. 13

98. *loc. cit.*

99. *Mricchakatika* II. 20. 18

100. *Mricchakatika* II. 0. 32 ff

101. *Mricchakatika* IV. 23. 9

102. *Mricchakatika* VI. 0.32

craving for money and wealth at any cost, but here is a woman of the same background who weighs pure love more than anything else. Nor does she cherish the longing only to become a house-wife of a poor man but also does not hesitate to take off her ornaments and present them to Rohasena to become the poor mother of a poor son.¹⁰³

Shudraka's capable and sympathetic treatment of the character of Vasantasena presents us an uncommon courtesan as the heroine of an uncommon drama. By her pleasing nature, her wit and intelligence, her compassion and sympathy, and above all her extreme sacrifice for the sake of love our heroine may be said to have excelled other heroines of Sanskrit dramas. A paragon of beauty Vasantasena's physical appearance has been all the more graceful by her qualities of head and heart. She is an unforgettable heroine and Shudraka deserves our unqualified praise and appreciation.

(iii) *Maitreya* represents the class of Jester in Sanskrit drama, but Shudraka's *Maitreya* is not of the general type of a Jester (*Vidushaka*), rather a completely different one from the common run of *vidushakas* in Sanskrit drama.

A Jester provides the comical elements in a Sanskrit drama. He belongs to the *brahmana* community, is supposed to be a fool to satirise himself and exhibit his great urge for food and drink. But our *Maitreya* has not come out of the pages of a text on dramaturgy as a *stock-vidushaka*. Like so many unique and uncommon characters Shudraka has created in *Maitreya* the type of a Jester who can claim to be a class by himself. He is indeed the 'all-time friend'¹⁰⁴ of the hero who sticks to his friend through thick and thin. He is not the usual 'fool of the Sanskrit drama and plays antics to create laughter. He certainly creates laughter and contributes much to the element of humour in the play but this is not based on his queer dress and speech or deformity and foolishness as is our common experience with jesters in Sanskrit plays. Shudraka has shown¹⁰⁵ his excellent mastery over words or statements through *Maitreya* right from the beginning, even under serious situations, which amuse us. In terms of modern technique *Maitreya's* role may be said to be a serio-comic one!

Maitreya makes his first appearance in the drama in the very opening of the drama proper and we immediately recognise him as a loyal and

103. *Mricchakatika* VI. 0. 90

104. *Mricchakatika* I 10 4

105. *Mricchakatika*, Cf. the opening scene

devoted companion of Charudatta. Since he is going to see his friend to hand over a jasmine-scented mantle sent by the dear companion of his noble friend he has no time to waste in accepting an invitation for meal which will fetch him some money also. In this connection we find him remembering fondly how he used to enjoy his sumptuous dishes during the days of affluence of Charudatta. As a true friend he always infuses hope and courage in Charudatta. When Charudatta refers to his former friends and relatives who does not visit him now owing to his poverty and feels sad, it is Maitreya who makes effort to remove his melancholy. He brands riches as rascals and most insignificant an object which cling to persons who do not enjoy them.¹⁰⁶ He finds his friend more attractive like the moon in the first day of the bright fortnight since his waning has been due to his charity like the moon being drunk in turn by the gods.¹⁰⁷ His love for Charudatta has no comparison, he is eager to see his friend away from the company of Vasantasena who as a courtesan is, in his opinion, like a pebble got inside a shoe causing trouble till its removal with difficulty. For the sake of his friend he has become antagonistic to Vasantasena and does not like her to visit Charudatta. He shows his pragmatism to observe that 'it is difficult to get a public woman who has no greed for money.'¹⁰⁸ He takes it for granted that the greedy harlot has not been satisfied with the jewel-necklace in lieu of her lost ornaments and that is why she has asked Maitreya to inform Charudatta that she would be visiting him in the evening. He wants it very much that his friend shuns the evil company and saves himself from a possible calamity.

We know about his timid nature when he wants even Radanika to accompany him to go out for offering oblations to the deities since he is afraid of being assaulted by bad people roaming on the highway in the evening. He likens himself to a mouse falling as a prey to a deadly snake greedy of frogs.¹⁰⁹ But when Radanika is found caught by the hair the humiliation is too much for him and he reacts sharply, and even wants the culprit Shakara to be killed by a wooden rod observing : what to be said about me, even a dog becomes violent in it's own den!¹¹⁰ Radanika's humiliation is Charudatta's humiliation

106. *Mricchakatika* I. 12. 1

107. *Mricchakatika* I. 11. 1

108. V. 6.7

109. *Mricchakatika* I. 16.5

110. *Mricchakatika* I. 42.17

and we appreciate his considerate cautioning to Radanika so that she does not report to her master the incident of her assault. His practical wisdom and sympathy for his friend prompt him to give such an advice to Radanika lest the man already suffering from misfortunes is agonised by the report of his attendant being manhandled by somebody else. His reminiscences of good old days and his consolatory words to Charudatta lamenting for the loss of his wealth show his tough attitude to fleeting riches and poverty. He scorns at poverty and exhibits how under heavy constraints he can maintain his usual humorous self and laugh in the face of extreme misfortunes!

Charudatta is quite aware of his friend's well-being. He can not make any compromise where the dignity of his friend is involved. Charudatta is naturally anxious about his friend when the *trust* is stolen and honesty of Charudatta has become open to question! Charudatta observes significantly : Let not Maitreya commit anything unbecoming out of distraction!¹¹¹ We may note that when the Judge appears to have found a *prima facie* case against Charudatta, the first person to be remembered by a distressed Charudatta is Maitreya : Maitreya, what violence of insult is befalling me today!¹¹² The hero knows him as a dear friend in prosperity and in adversity.¹¹³ Maitreya is absolutely consistent in his devotion to Charudatta, love for whom is his life-breath. Ironically enough such a loyal and loving friend becomes the immediate cause for the capital punishment inflicted on him by the court. It has been again due to his devotion to his friend that Maitreya could not but attack Shakara for bringing the charge against Charudatta. In the scuffle that follows we find the ornaments falling down from the person of Maitreya and the helpless Judge cannot ignore the direct evidence against the accused! He has made every effort with reasonable arguments and appeals to establish his friend's innocence but the Judge does not find any means to free his friend. He is mortified to hear the decision of the king that Charudatta is to be impaled and makes a most pathetic utterance: As your dear friend, how shall I be able to hold my life separated from you'¹¹⁴ A bewildered Maitreya becomes desperate to follow his friend to the other world, but at the behest of his friend he accepts the charge of Rohasena. He puts the child under the care of his mother and proceeds according to his plan. He advises

111. *Mricchakatika* III. 26. 43

112. *Mricchakatika* IX. 29

113. *Mricchakatika* III 28

114. *Mricchakatika* IX. 42.1

Dhuta that he should enter the fire first as it is for a Brahmin to go ahead in any form of rituals.¹¹⁵ Is it possible to find out any *Vidushaka* in any Sanskrit drama with such a sentiment or feeling? In the treatment of Shudraka the role and character of a *Vidushaka* have become so attractive that we have to recognise Maitreya as an important personality. Shudraka's admirable skill in characterisation has given life to 'the dry bones of a rhetorical definition'.¹¹⁶

(iv) Shudraka's delineation and characterisation have certainly made his hero, heroine and the Jester in the *Mricchakatika* unique in their respective classes or types, but undoubtedly his greatest achievement is the creation of the character of *Shakara*, related to the king as his brother-in-law named Samsthanaka. If Shudraka has been particularly successful in giving a remarkable shape to the role of a Jester, he is seen at his height of skill and imagination in portraying *Shakara* who has so much to contribute for an over-all success of his drama.

He has been called a *Shakara* because of his mannerism in using the palatal *sha* only, the *shakari*, a variety of Magadhi Prakrit, is the dialect used by him. *Sahitya Darpana* defines¹¹⁷ a *shakara* as a combination of pride, folly and vanity. He is to be of low origin, a brother of the unmarried wife of the king, and as such the king's brother-in-law who wields power because of his relationship with the king. As if to fit in with the background of the character a *shakara* has to use senseless, irrelevant and meaningless words with repetitions and wrong similes. A *Shakarian* speech is to abound in ideas opposed to the current norms or practice.¹¹⁸

Shudraka's *Shakara* not only possesses all these rhetorical qualifications but gives us something more. Undoubtedly the character is 'a triumph for the dramatic genius of Shudraka'¹¹⁹ giving him a place of pride among Sanskrit playwrights. A vile type of the nature of this *Shakara* has never been seen in any drama, there is no vice that he can not commit and it seems the whole world of vices appear before us through this creation of Shudraka! In him we see 'the darkest type of individual on whom the sun never seems to have extended his

115. *Mricchakatika* X. 57. 26

116. Ryder, *op. cit.*

117. *Mricchakatika* III 53

118. *Mricchakatika* (Edn.) Karmarkar, p. 360

119. Wilson, *ibid*

light'!¹²⁰ Even in the character of a villain one may find some traces of virtue but he is more than a villain, a worthless unprincipled rogue, in whom exists nothing that one may like or appreciate.

Like his own associate, the *vita*, one may at first sight brand Shakara as a fool of fools, but a critical analysis of his actions or observations will convince us that he only plays the fool, his idiotic behaviour is perhaps a cloak to conceal his villainy and vicious nature. He is not the man to swallow any insult without retaliating. All his actions against Vasantasena are caused by the extreme condemnation of him by the woman he wants to capture. He knows how to keep his artful designs away from the world and translate into action his evil motives in a quiet manner. Getting a kick from Vasantasena the knave resolves to kill her!¹²¹ and very cleverly gets his companions away from the spot to throttle Vasantasena. With his innate villainy the heartless creature wants to kill the monk who is no other than Samvahaka on a very flimsy ground, and intervened by the *vita* he offers a condition which exhibits his vindictive nature : Let him throw mud in the water or pour clear water in the mud, in a way that the water does not get muddy.¹²² The impossibility of the condition is not due to his block-headedness or a confused mind but is put cleverly to get his planned mischief done. We find him twisting or changing words¹²³ in the Shakarian way not as an act of foolishness but to befool others in an intelligent way. He wants to get Vasantasena by force and threatens her on point of death to be his woman. Shakara knows it that the woman he wants for himself is attracted towards Charudatta. He gives a caution to Charudatta that unless he hands over Vasantasena to him Charudatta will suffer from an enmity with him terminating in death only.¹²⁴ As a member of the corrupt society he measures everything in terms of money only and cannot think that his enemy may have any virtue since he is poor! He always refers to Charudatta as 'the poor Charudatta' perhaps to satisfy his ego. To him, a pervert and a remorseless villain, everything is possible in love and war. He threatens Vasantasena but also tries to please her by selected words and is surprised that still she does not like to have his company. He knows

120. B. Banerjee, *op. cit*

121. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 21 4

122. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 5. 25

123. Cf. *Mricchakatika*, I. 30. 22; VIII. 4 1 etc.

124. *Mricchakatika* I. 50. 24

the traditional manner of worshipping a goddess by uttering ten names glorifying her and applies the same method of worship with ten supposedly glorifying epithets for Vasantasena. With these epithets the clever knave depicts the conduct of Vasantasena as a courtesan and how far these epithets can be that pleasing for Vasantasena is a point of consideration.¹²⁵ We may well expect that the infuriated Shakara having failed to allure Vasantasena by his wealth and authority has abused her in this way. This is also a case of Shakara's intelligent use of words to express his feeling. His revengeful nature does not give him a peace of mind till he avenges himself of any humiliation caused to him. He strangles Vasantasena and shifts the charge of her murder on Charudatta and almost gets him executed. He has good experience of human character and by his threatening he gets his purpose served even in the Court.¹²⁶ In a moment of inadvertence he makes an observation in the Court 'not by me' which is noted as a point of evidence and Shakara is in an uncomfortable position, but he extricates himself from the situation by his cleverness. With much alertness he takes up the ornaments falling from the person of Maitreya providing a significant link in the chain of evidence against his arch-enemy. He proves too shrewd for his servant and neatly turns the table on him. When the servant rushes to the executioners to proclaim that the heinous crime of the murder of Vasantasena has been committed by his master and not by Charudatta, with his experience of worldly men and presence of mind he hoodwinks the executioners and the whole crowd in a way that the poor servant is found guilty of prattling!¹²⁷ In addition to his crafty nature he is found to be well aware of human nature and psychology. He is conscious of his position and authority by which he orders his servant Sthavaraka to bring the cart through the broken wall without caring for anything. His dialogue with the servant on the matter causes laughter no doubt, but his vanity and sense of authority become clear to us. Perhaps he is harbouring an idea of taking revenge on Vasantasena when he very cleverly observes: 'like the words of a wicked man she does not get out of my heart as yet'.¹²⁸

He has been presented as a vain, pervert idiot with no soft heart for anybody, nevertheless he has been instrumental in generating some

125. B. Banerjee, *op. cit*

126. *Mricchakatika* IX. 5.42

127. *Mricchakatika* X. 30.33

128. *Mricchakatika*, VIII, 8.6

best type of humour.¹²⁹ In addition to his Shakarian characteristic of speech which automatically evokes laughter his actions, movements and thoughts give rise to some really enjoyable moments. Hotly chased by Shakara and his men a nervous Vasantasena searches for her attendants uttering their names like *Pallavaka*, *Parabhritika* etc., Shakara with his cowardice nature gets frightened at first thinking that Vasantasena is calling people for her protection, but learning from his *Vita* that she is only calling out the names of her female attendants Shakara shows his valour by saying that he is able to kill hundreds of women. Since the names of the attendants called are associated with the season of spring Shakara ridicules Vasantasena to call forth the whole of the Spring but none can protect her when he is pursuing. With no learning he exhibits his knowledge and wisdom by frequently citing similes and instances from ancient texts and rides roughshod, so to say, over historical and mythological events. It is to be noted that he commits mistakes, as expected, when he refers to such textual cases but his similes from life or world experiences hit the target well. He has very aptly expressed the condition of his love-tormented heart at the very outset: 'my poor heart suffers like a piece of meat fallen in a heap of burning coal'.¹³⁰ When the *vita* declines to kill Vasantasena on the ground that he would not be able to get a raft for crossing to the other world, the knave gives him the assurance of providing a boat! He removes the *vita*'s fear of being found out as the murderer with the advice to kill her under a cover.¹³¹ Aptly does he describe himself as an insect inside a poisonous herb.¹³² Just as the insect finds it difficult to remain inside and tries hard to come out, in the like manner Shakara tries to come out of the situation by transferring the blame of Vasantasena's murder on somebody else, and in this matter he finds Charudatta to be the best prey since he is a pauper and everything can be made to be believed as having been committed by him. Always found with sinister motives all his actions and utterances are calculated, practical and bear the stamp of shrewd cunningness. All this proves clearly that he has more sense than he is usually supposed to have. His vicious intelligence or cunningness peeps through anything that he does or says. He knows it well how to wreak vengeance on anybody

129. See *infra*

130. *Mricchakatika* I. 18

131. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 24. 1

132. *Mricchakatika* IX. 2.1

daring to obstruct him in his way. A remorseless villain he has no heart or conscience as such, perhaps none but him can be seen in a poised calmness immediately after strangling Vasantasena and ask his *vita* to join him in a water sport in the lotus-tank!¹³³ Shudraka's success in creating this character can be assessed only by the fact that the very utterance of his name generates nothing but hatred and contempt in us and we can not but echo the wish of the *vita* : let there never be my contact with your!¹³⁴

Minor Characters

In his composition Shudraka has presented twenty-six male and seven female characters including the Stage Manager and his wife, besides the crowd and references to a few more persons like the king Palaka who have remained in the background. In his treatment Shudraka has given us to understand that no character, big or small, is considered by him as unimportant, he makes each of his characters contribute to the development and attractiveness of his drama. Among the characters created by him we may consider the four characters analysed above as the major ones since the whole theme is generally affected by them in a major way. As is but usual these characters have been delineated with all possible care, but what is remarkable in Shudraka's treatment is that his smaller or minor characters are presented with all attention and sympathy. An analysis of these characters will convince us that they occupy smaller space in the play according to necessity but are not insignificant or without any real purpose.

Among this type of characters stands Sharvilaka head and shoulder above all others. He plays a significant role in the over-all success of the hero in his love affair and regaining his prestige and dignity.

Sharvilaka is introduced in the third act as a burglar who bores a hole in the building of Charudatta at night. He is the son of a distinguished Brahmin but has been compelled to take to this crime in order to procure fees for the release of Madanika, his lady-love, from the bondage to Vasantasena. Without the fees he is not able to materialise his love, and so he is out at night in search of money to be gathered with his expertise in the art of burglary. He has mastered burglary as a technical art and is proficient-both in theory and practice.

133. *Mricchakatika*, VIII. 41.1

134. *ibid.* VIII. 41

He knows it well where and under what condition the boring would be safe and easy. He has confidence in his own skill and observes that next morning people would both condemn his burglary and appreciate his skill¹³⁵ in the job. He finds out a region of baked bricks on the wall and decides to effect a full water-jar in the process of creating the hole. That his is not a vain boasting is clear from Charudatta's remark next morning that the hole is charming to look at.¹³⁶ He appreciates the burglar's skill even in such kind of work.¹³⁷ Though he has learnt the art he is not a professional burglar and is very conscious of the fact that he is putting a pure Brahmin family into a disgraceful state by his act.¹³⁸ Even while committing the crime he follows some principles. He will not rob a woman of her ornaments, nor take away the possessions of a Brahmin, nor will he lift a child from the nurse's lap.¹³⁹ He has the professional knowledge to achieve success in his effort without trouble and without going for such things. He is a romantic lover with the natural human psychology. When Madanika shows her grave concern for the safety of Charudatta in the context of Sharvilaka's burglary he exhibits his human weakness and jealousy with an outburst against Madanika. He is unable to bear it that the woman for whose sake he has brought such a disgrace on his noble family has no word of praise or appreciation for his sincerity and enthusiasm, but has more anxiety for another man! He uses strong words against the fickle nature of women but calms down as soon as he realises that he is demonstrating his anger against something inconceivable. Madanika tells him about the affair of love between her mistress and Charudatta and Sharvilaka is repentant for all that he has done. Next he acts according to the advice of Madanika and gets the hands of his lady-love against the returning of the stolen ornaments. Just at that moment he learns from an announcement that king Palaka has clapped down Aryaka, the cow-herd boy, in a terrible prison-house. Aryaka is a dear friend of Sharvilaka and at this moment Aryaka needs the help of his friend who is now just united with a wife. Sharvilaka rises to the occasion and with the consent of his wife decides to run for the rescue of Aryaka. Sharvilaka sends the newly-married Madanika

135. *Mricchakatika* III. 13

136. *Mricchakatika* III. 21. 25

137. *Mricchakatika*, III. 22.1

138. *Mricchakatika* III. 18.21

139. *Mricchakatika* IV. 6

to the house of a tradesman-friend Rebhila and sets out for the adventure. It is really an achievement and at the same time a very bright side of his character that Sharvilaka leaves the company of his newly-married wife and risks his own life for the friend. Here is also evident his love for the country and he does not hesitate to respond to the call of time. The dramatist elevates him to lead the revolution against the despot Palaka and we learn later that he has been successful in his mission. He has killed Palaka, freed his friend Aryaka and installed him as the king of the land with the people's choice.

A poor and ordinary citizen has been able to organise a revolution and leads it to success is a fact sufficient enough to project Sharvilaka as having a personality with indomitable spirit, exemplary courage, much resourcefulness, sense of duty and sacrificing nature. In the beginning we find him rash and impetuous but slowly and surely the dramatist has turned him into a lovable personality with all care and sympathy. He has become a real friend of the hero who gains everything through his efforts,¹⁴⁰ and this character with youthful enthusiasm and chivalrous spirit may well be recognised as the sub-hero or *upa-nayaka* of the play. Shudraka's Sharvilaka has not only fulfilled the rhetorical requirements¹⁴¹ that in a *prakarana*-type of drama the denouement has to be the result of activities of one other than the hero,¹⁴² but has also contributed much to the suspense and attractiveness of the drama.

The drama of Shudraka has two *vitas*, one associated with Shakara and the other with Vasantasena. Something like a courtier a *vita* has become a conventional character in a Sanskrit drama. He looks like a gay-attendant of his employer and clings to him for his maintenance. An agent for love-making he has also to do the conciliation of an offended woman. *Vitas* are cultured persons and possess individual traits.

Of the two *vitas* here the one with Shakara has a more effective role in the development of the play. He is a man of culture and has been true to his employer in his attempt to capture Vasantasena. He is rather surprised to see that Vasantasena is behaving contrary to her profession and trying to escape his master possessing money and power. But when he learns her inclination towards Charudatta he observes that a gem is united with a gem. He not only helps Vasantasena to take

140. *Mricchakatika* X. 58. 37

141. See *supra*

142. See *supra*

the clue from Shakara's words about the possibility of her being detected but actually helps her to slip into the house of Charudatta.¹⁴³ Since then he practically plays a foil to the unscrupulous rogue. When she finds Vasantasena in the cart of Shakara in the garden he feels extremely sorry and thinking that she has at last gone the way of a courtesan for money he rebukes her strongly. Vasantasena informs him of the unfortunate incident of the change of carts bringing her to the den of the rascal and prays for his help. The *vita* tries his best to save her but the shrewdness of Shakara proves to be too much for the *vita* and Vasantasena meets the inevitable. The *vita* is no longer able to remain with him and shuns his evil company to join the group of revolutionaries. He is filled with intense grief and remorse for not being able to save the life of the gem of a woman like Vasantasena. He prays for the departed soul and wishes that she be not born a courtesan again but be born in a noble family. He is also an admirer of Charudatta's noble personality and is ashamed that he has been in the company of a fellow manhandling Radanika, an attendant of Charudatta. He requests Maitreya not to report the incident to Charudatta which will pain him. Unfortunately for him he has been compelled to live with the rogue as a parasite but by virtue of his honesty, courageous spirit, his conscientious actions and discretion he has certainly earned a bright individuality to mark him out as the *vita* not belonging to the general class. We appreciate very much his last remark about the master that he has so long served: let there never be my contact with you!¹⁴⁴

The other *vita* with Vasantasena has much lesser a role to play. He is seen in the fifth act only accompanying his mistress to the house of her lover. He is a gay and jovial type of person with an eloquence and poetic mind. His comments on storm and rains exhibit his power of observation of nature. He knows his mistress as an expert in erotics, still he gives her some practical advice for success in love-play. He is well acquainted with the life and environments of a courtesan and wants his lady to be pacified and pacify her lover at the same time: anger is both an obstacle to and an incitement in love-making.¹⁴⁵ When Vasantasena wants that her umbrella-bearer be now on service to her *vita* he has the intelligence to feel that his lady has cleverly asked him

143. See *supra*

144. See *supra*

145. *Mricchakatika* V. 34

to return. He wishes Vasantasena all the best and returns. On the whole the *vita* has been a likeable personality.

We get three *cetas*, serving three personalities, who in one way or other attract our attention. We find them as loyal servants and are supposed to be insignificant characters, but Shudraka has not neglected them and put them with qualities which we appreciate.

Of the three servants the one associated with Shakara, named Sthavaraka, stands out as a prominent individual. He is a slave but what a type of slave! He serves his master with care and trust but declines to carry out his order to kill Vasantasena. He shows a tremendous strength of mind to tell his master that his physical existence is under the control of his master but he can not have any control over his character.¹⁴⁶ Sthavaraka is indeed unhappy over his life of a slave and desires to be in a better state of existence in his next birth. The killing of a woman is a sin which he does not want to commit in expectation of a better life. His blatant refusal to carry out the order of the rogue pulls him out of his class of slaves. His attitude on this occasion draws praise and appreciation from the *vita* who considers it unjust that a man of Sthavaraka's character has been the slave of a veritable rogue like Shakara.¹⁴⁷ He is ready to help his master in all respects in his enjoyment and love-making but has the conscience and sense of morality of a high order.

In the beginning we find him doing his job as a slave with sincerity. He follows his master in the chase of Vasantasena and joins his master in tempting the woman to come over to Shakara for worldly enjoyment. He asks Vasantasena to sport with him who is king's favourite and enjoy flesh and meat.¹⁴⁸ He comes of the simple stock and hence all his words of entreaties bespeak of a simple mind.

He shows his great moral courage in his desperate attempt to save the life of Charudatta. He even stakes his own life to throw himself from the terrace with chains round his legs. He tells the executioners that Charudatta is innocent in the case and the heinous crime of the murder of Vasantasena has been committed by Shakara. Shakara, however, is too cunning for the poor *ceta* and hoodwinks everybody to foil the honest effort of the poor but noble self.¹⁴⁹ He regrets it very

146. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 24. 24

147. *ibid.* VIII. 26

148. *ibid.* I.26

149. See *supra*

much that because of his limitations as a slave he has not been able to save the noble man. Charudatta appreciates his sincere attempt and thinks that only the fate has not fallen in with it.¹⁵⁰ Shudraka depicts Sthavaraka to show that even a low-born slave can possess intrinsic qualities and exhibit a strength of mind for a noble cause when the moment of test comes. Such a slave is certainly rare and such a man should not remain a slave; we are happy to see that Charudatta has rewarded this common man with a great soul by freeing him from his slavery.¹⁵¹

Loyal and obedient Vardhamanaka is the *ceta* of Charudatta. In his very first appearance in the third act he gives us the impression that he is fond of his noble master in spite of his poverty. He seems to be anxious about his master that he is staying out of doors till midnight. He has been entrusted by Charudatta to bring Vasantasena to the garden and as a dutiful servant he sets himself to discharge his duties properly. He, however, commits a small mistake in not bringing the cart-cushion and hurries back to his own place to take the cushion. This small mistake on his part causes the most fateful event of the interchange of carts for which the hero and the heroine have to pay dearly, a loyal servant becomes an indirect instrument in putting them in the greatest catastrophe which they could hardly apprehend. As a result of this incident of the interchange of carts Vardhamanaka gets directly involved in the development of the plot. Till this event he has been just a servant with normal traits of a human being and appreciative of his master's noble qualities. He is certainly a servant of anybody's liking.

The third *ceta* is that of Vasantasena named Kumbhilaka whom we find to have acquired certain qualifications due to his association with a courtesan. He is jolly and frivolous and is expert in making jokes with interesting jugglery of words. He is a pleasing man who can create humour with a keen presence of mind.¹⁵² He boasts of his knowledge of music in which he claims to have excelled Tumburu and Narada, two divine exponents of music! He consciously makes the point to laugh to himself by observing that he can sing like an ass. Though we do not find him directly involved in the play excepting that he accompanies his lady in her most significant journey to the house of

150. *Mricchakatika* X. 31

151. *Mricchakatika* X. 58. 31

152. See *infra*

her lover, he has been able to establish himself as a likeable character by virtue of his sharp intelligence, his skill in twisting of words and capacity to create fun and humour.

In the second act Shudraka has presented some characters not so important in our society but, he has exhibited his rare skill in turning these persons into interesting fellows. He has brought four gamblers—Mathura and his associate, with Samvahaka and Darduraka, into action to create an extremely enjoyable scene. Of these gamblers Samvahaka has been directly involved in the development of the play while Darduraka, though we do not hear of him again, joins the revolutionaries and gets associated with the sub-plot running undercurrent. Shudraka could easily draw these characters in an ordinary way but as a dramatist of high order he has made them lively and enjoyable. He seems to have a good knowledge of gambling and gamblers' life and philosophy.

Among the gamblers Samvahaka has played a very significant role in the play.¹⁵³ A former masseur of the hero he is not a professional hard-core gambler but has become addicted to it to fight with his bad days. He has not been able to pay off his debt to a gambler and is running away violating the unwritten law of the gambling house. Hotly chased by the head of the gambling house and his associate he is captured and assaulted for his crime. Intervened by Darduraka he is able to take to his heels and enters into the house of Vasantasena. As an attendant of Charudatta he gets a warm reception from Vasantasena who also frees him from his bond. Samvahaka is a man of honest and sensitive nature and would not rest idle till he has been able to do something for her.¹⁵⁴ Disgusted with the troubles and miseries of his worldly life he decides to embrace the life of a Buddhist monk and asks his benefactress to remember that the gambler Samvahaka has turned a monk.¹⁵⁵ With this background when we find the monk Samvahaka entering the garden where Vasantasena is being taken to fall in the clutches of Shakara we feel hopeful that something will happen in favour of Vasantasena. Instead he falls in a prey to Shakarian atrocities which as a man of deep religious faith he endures quietly. By virtue of his self-restraint and determination he has elevated himself to a higher plane and shortly after he helps Vasantasena to survive and

153. See *supra*

154. See *supra*

155. See *supra*

get united with her hero. Though he ran away from the gamblers' bond he is a man of character, temperamentally mild, but determined in his plan. It is perhaps circumstantial pressure that forces him to have recourse to the immoral step to avoid his creditors. A grateful Charudatta appoints him the head of monasteries in the land.¹⁵⁶

Mathura, the superintendent of the State Gambling House, and his associate are out and out worldly men who consider money above everything else. They must realise their dues from debtors even if the debtor has to sell away his parents for the repayment of debt. They do not seem to have any scruples in the matter and they belong to a world of greed, suspicion and wrath. Such fellows can not be likeable ones but Shudraka brings them before us as representatives of the class they belong to. Their actions and manners give us a true picture of their life and thought. The other gambler Darduraka draws our sympathy by his actions against the two gamblers. He shows his courage, humanism and alertness in saving Samvahaka from the assault by the two gamblers. He is also a debtor to the gambling house and since he has offended its officer he joins the revolutionaries to escape the wrath of the king. It is to the credit of the dramatist that such an ordinary gambler like Darduraka appears before us with so remarkable a spirit and sense of humour.

Aryaka, the choice of the people to succeed the despot king Palaka on the throne, appears in the drama but for a short time. He is introduced to us by an announcement in the fourth act that the king has put Aryaka in chains since he is afraid that as per prediction of soothsayers Aryaka might occupy his throne. His arrest inspires his friend Sharvilaka into action to form a revolutionary party for his rescue. He breaks away from the prison and we see him first in person in the sixth act incognito when he slips into the cart of Charudatta. On the way the tricks of Chandanaka saves him and he proceeds to the place where the hero is waiting to receive his lady supposed to be in the cart. The hero of the main story meets the hero of the undercurrent sub-plot. Charudatta is surprised to see a man of his appearance and influence in such an unmerited state of humiliation with one fetter clinging to his foot. Aryaka seeks protection from Charudatta who having learnt the injustice done to him helps him to flee the country in his cart. The two are bound with fetters of love.

156. *ibid.* X. 58. 25

Even in his small appearance Aryaka impresses us as a man of courage, martial spirit, courtesy, extremely alert and as a tool in the hands of Fate. We find him ready to fight the king's guards even without any weapon and lay down his life to avoid an ignoble death in the prison.¹⁵⁷ His cool temperament prevents him from taking to a rash act and he wins the sympathy and favour of Chandanaka to escape the wrath of the guards. His balance of mind and judgement save him from a sure calamity.

He is mortified that he has been unjustly clapped down by the king since he is not to be blamed if his destiny is like that.¹⁵⁸ It does not seem that he has any ambition in the beginning to become a king and he does not like to have any hostility with the king. He sheds tears on the streets and does not know where to go after he has been freed from the prison by his friend Sharvilaka.¹⁵⁹ Shudraka has steadily hardened the soft and mild personality of a common man like Aryaka to make him fit to be chosen by the people to occupy the throne.

He has not forgotten his friends and associates who stood by his side at the time of his distressed and unfortunate circumstances. The first thing he does after his installation as the king is to make Charudatta, the king of Kushavati. He awards the coveted title of a 'legally wedded wife' to Vasantasena and all those helping him in his darker days are rewarded according to their respective capacities. Whether he has been a cow-herd boy or not,¹⁶⁰ Aryaka has certainly shone as an uncommon common man with much originality and individuality. Within a short compass Shudraka has created a great soul with some basic qualities in Aryaka and has shaped him as a true leader of the people.

It is indeed to be admired that even an innocent child Rohasena has been so much lively and significant a character in the treatment of Shudraka. He has the normal childish instinct to cry for a golden toy-cart like the one his playmate possesses but shows a sharp intelligence in observing that the lady with ornaments cannot really be his mother. This remark of Rohasena makes Vasantasena weep and with tears in her eyes she offers her ornaments to get a golden cart for the child. He has the craving for a golden toy-cart but he really shows a maturer

157. *ibid.* VI. 17

158. *Mricchakatika* VI. 2

159. *Mricchakatika* VI. 2 1

160. See *supra*

understanding when he refuses to accept the gift made while weeping. He does not know why the executioners are taking his father and for what purpose, but having learnt that they are acting only under the king's order to kill his father Rohasena appeals to them to kill him and set his father free. As a loving son he has done exactly what he is expected to do. In the last scene we find the child holding on to her mother's garments to prevent her from entering into the fire. He has by now become aware of the hard realities of the world and realizes it fully that with his mother his last resort of affection would be lost to him. His deep love for and attachment to his father have drawn sympathetic appreciation even from the executioners. As a child he has but a small role to play in the drama and may be held as a minor character, but Shudraka has projected the child in a way that he has been a very significant character in the development of the drama. To console the weeping child Vasantasena puts her ornaments in the child's little clay-cart which eventually comes out to be the strongest evidence against Charudatta and the child becomes an architect of his father's calamity!

Towards the end of the second act we see Karnapuraka only for a short while. He is an attendant of Vasantasena with great valour and courage. Staking his own life he saves the life of a monk from the infuriated elephant of Vasantasena. In this commendable feat Karnapuraka has certainly given evidence of his spirit of selfless service and his quality of taking the right decision on the spur of the moment. While narrating the incident to his lady he corrects himself by observing that it has been done by the one Karnapuraka who has grown fat on the food given by Vasantasena.¹⁶¹ This attitude reveals his modesty and sense of gratitude. Shudraka has created this character not without any specific purpose. All his characters are contributing to the main theme and Karnapuraka is no exception. As it is the character is apparently a minor one, but through it the dramatist makes a positive step towards the deepening of the heroine's attachment for the hero.¹⁶² The episode of Karnapuraka is indeed purposeful for exciting Vasantasena's passionate love for Charudatta as she wraps her up with the jasmine-scented mantle of the hero whose munificence even in poverty is also well exhibited here.

161. *Mricchakatika* II. 19. 18

162. See *supra*

We get two loyal and capable officers in Viraka and Chandanaka who have elevated themselves to high administrative ranks by dint of their personal qualities. They have no aristocracy or social dignity behind them, the one is a barber by origin and the other comes of a cobbler's family, but they hold positions like that of a police commissioner and a state military officer respectively! They are put as the leaders of the guards on the highway to find out the escaping Aryaka.¹⁶³ As diligent and watchful officers they take care of each passing vehicle when Vardhamanaka arrives on the spot with Aryaka in the cart of Charudatta. The cart is stopped by the officers for investigation, but when Vardhamanaka informs that Vasantasena is going in the cart to meet Charudatta Chandanaka asks him to go away without any check up. Chandanaka is loyal and dutiful but as an admirer of Charudatta he does not hesitate to believe that the cart is really carrying Vasantasena. Viraka, however, is not that much convinced of the certainty of the statement and wants to follow the letters of the order of the king. The name of Charudatta is not sufficient for him to release the cart without any inspection since he is not prepared to trust even his father when the king's business is in question.¹⁶⁴ Viraka asks his colleague to look into the cart to be sure and peeping into the cart he finds Aryaka therein. Aryaka prays for protection and Chandanaka promptly assures him. Chandanaka tries to hoodwink his companion that he has actually seen Vasantasena inside. Viraka is really alert in the discharge of his duty and suspects the statement of his companion because of his faltering words. An interesting altercation follows¹⁶⁵ and Viraka wants to check the cart himself. As he goes to look inside the cart Chandanaka gives him a kick and advises Vardhamanaka to drive away. Before the cart leaves Chandanaka hands over a sword to Aryaka. In their approach Viraka appears to be more alert and true to his responsibilities. He holds duty above anything else and is like a part of the steel-frame administrative machinery. He has confidence in his colleague and asks him to inspect the cart but the faltering Chandanaka rightly arouses a suspicion in his mind. The importance of his role becomes evident in the trial scene when he reports that Vasantasena went to meet Charudatta in his cart. It is again Viraka who has been used by the dramatist to bring to the knowledge of the

163. See *supra*

164. *Mricchakatika* VI. 15

165. *ibid.* VI. 20 ff

Court that a female dead-body has been found in the garden where Vasantasena was to meet Charudatta.

Chandanaka, on the other hand, is also dutiful and not a traitor. He is an admirer of both Charudatta and Vasantasena and does not want that a noble man of Charudatta's disposition be accused of treason for helping a fugitive acting against the king. Official duties and administrative norms have not made Chandanaka a hardened official. He weighs the security of his hero more than the order of the king. Chandanaka has certainly acted against the king in his anxiety to guard Charudatta and save Aryaka, a friend of Sharvilaka who once saved his life.¹⁶⁶ Chandanaka has perhaps been uneasy in his conscience by acting against the king since he is found arguing within himself that having first assured the rebel of security he must not let him down now.¹⁶⁷ Chandanaka has helped the man seeking his protection but in doing so he has betrayed his office no doubt. It is indeed difficult to justify his stand and consider his conduct as an act of glorious disobedience. Chandanaka's presence of mind has saved both Charudatta and Aryaka and he thus makes a significant contribution to the development of the drama. As an officer of the State Viraka certainly excels Chandanaka who, however, wins our sympathy by his actions in favour of the hero. Both the officers are likeable persons in their respective attitudes and their types are to be seen in every administration.

A judge is the keeper of law and executor of justice in any country. We have in the drama the role of a Judge making an appearance in the ninth act only. Here according to the prevalent law of the country the Judge is only to find out the truth in a complaint but the final verdict on the finding rests with the king.¹⁶⁸ The Judge here knows his limitations and recommends to the king what sort of punishment could be inflicted on the defendant Charudatta who is a brahmin. The Judge has a thankless task, he has to go deep into the minds of others to find out the truth in a case and he is subject to public censure in case he commits a mistake in his decision. Judge is fully conscious of his difficult task and is correct in his observation that praise is far off for him.¹⁶⁹ In deciding a legal matter he depends on facts and evidences

166. *ibid.* VI. 19. 3

167. *loc. cit.*

168. See *supra*

169. *ibid.* IX. 2. 20 ff

without any preferential treatment, but he believes in human goodness and pays sincere respects to Charudatta. Though he believes in Charudatta's guiltlessness in the matter he orders for his removal from the seat in the court as soon as he is convinced that the evidences are against Charudatta. He adores Charudatta but is strictly guided by facts and evidences. He conducts the business of law in the case with an open mind and examines the circumstances thoroughly before pronouncing his judgment on the complaint. He has been projected as a strong personality with human feelings and impartial stand. His human instincts and wide experiences in worldly matters do not allow him to believe that Charudatta has really committed the murder of Vasantasena, but the evidences in facts and circumstances force him to declare Charudatta as the sinner. The Judge is well aware that his authority is only with regard to finding out the truth and the action to be taken on the judgment rests with the king, still he submits to the king that Charudatta is Brahmin and as such should not be killed but banished from the country with all his possessions.¹⁷⁰ The dramatist has very clearly brought out the difficult nature of the task of the Judge and has shown his sympathy for him as he transacts the business of the Court with all legality making the best use of a worst situation to save the man whom in his heart of hearts he can not believe to be a murderer. The Judge wins our sympathy and appreciation for all that he has said and done.

We have two court-officials or assessors in the guildsman and the scribe who assist the Judge in dealing with the complaint of Shakara against Charudatta. They have been presented in quite a believable relief and are much alert with a good presence of mind. When Shakara draws the attention of the Court to the statement of Vasantasena's mother that Charudatta has an attachment for Vasantasena, the officials react immediately to observe that they do not find anything wrong in it. They treat Charudatta with utmost respects in their words and jestures but are not found wanting in the matter of finding out the truth in the legal suit against him. They request Charudatta to explain to the court how, when and with whom Vasantasena went away from his residence.¹⁷¹ This is an important point of inquiry that they have made. They make an enquiry with the mother of Vasntasena if the ornaments falling in the court from the person of Maitreya belong to her daughter

170. *Mricchakatika* IX. 39

171. *Mricchakatika* IX. 18 14

or to Charudatta.¹⁷² They appear as likeable persons with their sharp intelligence, understanding of the situation, legal sense and logical bent of mind.

Shodhanaka, the court-attendant, does his job of making the Court-hall ready for hearings of legal suits and receives the Judge and his colleagues. He has also the duty of reporting to the Court about the plaintiffs present with their respective suits. He knows the devilish nature of Shakara and as he sees Shakara approaching the Court-hall he tries to avoid the range of his sight since he is well aware of the fact that his masters in the Court would not like to deal with the rogue. He has, however, to perform the unpleasant duty of calling Shakara to the Court at the bidding of the Judge. His is the character of a common attendant with the usual timid nature who is also alert and dutiful.

In the fourth act in the mansion of Vasantasena the dramatist has brought in the *bandhulas* or bastards to meet Maitreya. They have no bearing in the theme of the drama and are perhaps presented here to show the variety of the inmates of Vasantasena's house. The bastards describe themselves as nourished on food of others, as attached to the wealth of others and so on.¹⁷³ As orphans and outcasts they are in an unending servitude. We have not only sympathy but a feeling of compassion as well for their unhappy plight of suffering in the social order. Shudraka speaks of even such insignificant characters in their correct perspectives which evoke our sympathy and make us appreciative of his skill in characterisation.

Like the *bandhulas* the executioners are also insignificant characters but our dramatist has taken great care in delineating them and they appear before us as if in flesh and blood. Shudraka has invested the low-born executioners with all human feelings and sentiments. We appreciate them observing that they are no doubt born in the family of *chandalas* but the real *chandala* is the king who has ordered for the capital punishment of a virtuous person like Charudatta. Their hearts melt in compassion for the little Rohasena and they beg pardon of him for the action they have been forced to take at the king's order. They have to respond to the call of duty most reluctantly and it is the king who is to be blamed here and not they. They have all respects for Charudatta and wish it very much that he be saved at the last moment by some unforeseen turn of events. They make all possible delay in

172. *Mūcchakatika* IX. 33. 1 ff

173. *Mūcchakatika* IV. 28

executing their work and do not yield to the pressure of Shakara to kill Charudatta quickly along with his son. To do their duty one of the executioners raise the sword over Charudatta's head but it falls down on the ground perhaps owing to a human weakness in performing a job against his will! There is another point to note here. The order of the king is to impale Charudatta but the executioners attempt to kill him with one stroke of the sword causing thereby as little pain as possible to the person of the victim.¹⁷⁴ They are thus acting against the order of the king and it is perhaps owing to their sympathy for Charudatta. The simple-minded executioners think in their own way to be of some service to Charudatta. The goodness of the insignificant people and their sympathy for the aggrieved soul added by a strength of mind in not yielding to pressure from an authority make them quite attractive for us and Shudraka deserves unqualified appreciation for his skill in portraying characters from the lowest strata of the society with a genuine care.

It goes to the credit of the dramatist that king Palaka has been given a major share in the development of the drama without making any physical appearance. The ruler has remained in the background while *all types of common men take active part in the fast-moving action-packed play*, but we can see him before our mind's eyes as the embodiment of vices. In the Prologue itself we are told about the king's atrocious nature and at the later stage information about his misrule and despotism have been put in a manner that we feel the suffering of the subjects under him. The poor people of Ujjayini have been oppressed both by the tyranny of the ruler and the whims of his representative Shakara as a consequence of which the people must have thought about a change in the ruler. The rapidity with which the revolution has been organised to success is indicative of these facts.

In the tenth act of his play Shudraka has introduced a crowd following Charudatta who is led to the southern cemetery for being impaled. The crowd is sympathetic towards Charudatta and consist of common people of Ujjayini. When the attendant Sthavaraka appears in the scene to certify the innocence of Charudatta and the guilt of Shakara the crowd believe in the statement and Shakara is held responsible for the murder of Vasantasena. They mention the attendant as noble perhaps because his statement has been to their liking. When they learn that Shakara is at the root of all this the citizens assembled there are about to kill the rogue.

¹⁷⁴. *Mricchakatika* X, 36. 45

Of the two heroines of the drama, the wife of Charudatta is the one born of a noble family. Worthy wife of a husband with a great soul Dhuta's only mission of life is to see her husband happy with his honour and dignity fully preserved. When she learns about the burglary her immediate reaction is to enquire about the physical safety of Maitreya and her husband, and this is absolutely natural, but she faints on hearing that the ornaments kept in trust with her husband by the courtesan have been stolen. She apprehends a stain in the character of her husband as the consequence of this loss of ornaments and observes painfully:¹⁷⁵ it would have been better if he were injured physically and not stained in his character. She is disturbed to think that none would believe the loss of the ornaments in burglary and would hold her husband responsible for concealing the trust. She takes no time to send her jewel necklace her only possession at the moment, to her husband to be used in recompense. Charudatta is proud of his wife whom he thinks to be keeping with her husband's turn of fortunes.¹⁷⁶ The wife also thinks her husband to be her best ornament¹⁷⁷ and declines to receive back the necklace from Vasantasena. She has a broad and noble heart with which she receives Vasantasena as her sister and congratulates her. She cannot think of staying in this world separated from her husband and she goes to offer herself to be consumed in fire before she hears about the killing of her husband. Even her child and an entreating friend like Maitreya cannot stop her from taking the step. She does not even listen to the shastric injunction from Maitreya that the wife should not enter the fire without her husband.¹⁷⁸ Shudraka makes Charudatta appear in the scene just at the time and he asks his wife to stop with a very pathetic appeal: Why are you sacrificing your life when I am still living; by your noble deeds and behaviour you are not to be associated with the region like the earth, but it is also not proper for you either to enjoy the happiness in the other world leaving your husband behind!¹⁷⁹ She is not only a devoted wife, sincere and loyal to her husband in all respects, but also sets an ideal of womanhood by her noble and dignified attitude. In a short compass Shudraka's Dhuta wins our love and appreciation with an impressive characterization.

175. *Mricchakatika* III. 26. 11

176. *Mricchakatika* III. 28

177. *Mricchakatika* VI. 0. 45

178. *Mricchakatika* X. 57. 15

179. *Mricchakatika* X. 56

Radanika, the female attendant of Charudatta, has a fairly large and important role to play in the drama. She is loyal and dutiful with an affectionate heart. She has every sympathy for her master falling on bad days due to his munificence. When Maitreya warns her not to report to Charudatta the incident of her manhandling by Shakara lest he is pained by it the intelligent young lady says that she is having teeth that are clenched,¹⁸⁰ i.e., true to her name Radanika, and is not going to say anything about it. She has remained with her master through his bad days and expresses her hopes for better days of Charudatta, when she pacifies the little Rohasena that he would play with a golden cart when fortune will again smile on his father. She knows her master's mind and his inclination towards Vasantasena and so introduces Vasantasena to Rohasena as his mother. Radanika is present on two significant occasions in the play, viz., when Vasantasena fills the toy-cart of Rohasena with her ornaments and when the burglary has been committed,-and thus the importance of the role has been vindicated. Her characteristic features have given her a respectable position and a slave-girl has not only become one with the family of her master but also shares the effects of the bad days of the family. Maitreya and Radanika are two outstanding examples of loyalty to a master.

Madanika is a young charming lady serving Vasantasena as a slave-girl. Madanika serves her lady with great affection and sometimes takes liberty with her as a friend.¹⁸¹ She, however, knows her limitations and is anxious to know the mind of her mistress regarding her choice about her partner of life. She observes the absentmindedness of Vasantasena and is intelligent enough to realize that her mind must have been occupied by someone whom she really loves. When she learns that Charudatta is the man of her choice she does not hesitate to draw her attention to his poverty.¹⁸² She seems to be quite happy to know that her lady has found the man of her choice, and she wants her to make a love-journey without delay. Jovial by nature she is quite practical in her approach to life and has a good sense of humour.

She is in love with Sharvilaka who brings some ornaments as ransom to release her from her servitude. Madanika becomes very angry when she learns that the ornaments have been got by him through burglary at night. She cannot bear the idea that her chosen man should become a burglar to get such a trifling thing as a woman and stake his life and

180. *Mricchakatika* I. 52. 8

181. *Mricchakatika* II. 0. 20

182. *Mricchakatika* II. 0. 59

character. She becomes extremely perturbed to learn that the burglary has been committed in the house of Charudatta, the man of her lady's choice. She becomes much anxious about the personal safety of Charudatta during Sharvilaka's adventurous operation and Sharvilaka assures her that no physical injury has been done to anybody there. She then advises Sharvilaka to return the ornaments to her lady, the owner of the ornaments, as a messenger of Charudatta.¹⁸³ Her intelligence and presence of mind save Sharvilaka and herself also from greater problems. Her self-respect, moral courage and truthfulness are evident at least in this particular scene in the fourth act.

Her qualities of head and heart make a very favourable impression on us and the dramatist has endowed her with such characteristic features that give her an individuality. Immediately after her union with Sharvilaka she does not stand in the way of her husband responding to a call of duty and accepts a life of suffering from separation. Sharvilaka goes to organize a revolution and Madanika has to bear with the pangs silently, she has just entered a new life but does not get any chance to enjoy herself and allows her husband to rush for the sake of his friend.¹⁸⁴ Sharvilaka also appreciates this gesture of Madanika. She has indeed made a sacrifice but we do not find her stand appreciated which she so richly deserves! In the last scene, practically a scene of reunion, where Shudraka has brought in all important characters together, each getting his or her due share from the state or from Charudatta excepting Madanika. This young lady has not cared for her own happiness and has put the interest of the country above self, but she is forgotten at the time when good days have come upon everyone. Radanika is also not seen here but Madanika's should have been a different case and the dramatist could possibly bring her in the scene to be united with Sharvilaka. The lady who has denied herself so much is ignored in this way and we may consider her as the 'one ignored in the *kavya*'.

It is certainly an admirable skill of Shudraka that he has given us the character of an old procuress, i.e., the mother of Vasantasena (*vriddha*) with much care and sympathy. She has a silent appearance in the fourth act when Maitreya sees the old ugly woman in the eighth chamber of the mansion of Vasantasena during his visit to the place.¹⁸⁵

183. *Mricchakatika* IV. 21. 6

184. *Mricchakatika* IV. 25. 2

185. *Mricchakatika* IV. 29.1

She has been described as sitting on a raised seat wrapped in a flower-cloak with greasy legs and a fat belly filled with spirits etc. In the second act we have a reference to her made by a female attendant of Vasantasena who reports that the mother has asked Vasantasena to perform the daily worship of the deities. In the fourth act a message is sent by the mother to Vasantasena through an attendant that the king's brother-in-law has sent ornaments for Vasantasena worth ten thousand gold coins with a cart and that she should go to him. We get her with an active part in the court-scene. She appears with a typical character of a prostitute in the earlier part but we have her with a totally changed attitude in the court-scene. She appreciates her daughter's choice of Charudatta in enjoying the pleasures of youth and makes no secret of her daughter's affairs with Charudatta. The nobility of Charudatta is clear to her when Charudatta stands up and salutes her in the court-hall out of courtesy. She prays for a long life of Charudatta and does not believe in the charge brought against him as the murderer of her daughter. She weeps for her daughter but wants Charudatta to survive. She forcefully denies that the ornaments, falling from the person of Maitreya in the court, and which have become the most formidable evidence against Charudatta, did really belong to her daughter. In her desperate effort to save the valuable life of Charudatta she goes even so far as to say that she as the mother of the reportedly murdered Vasantasena is the plaintiff in the legal suit against Charudatta, the defendant, and as the plaintiff she demands the release of the accused. The tears of her eyes for the daughter wash away her greed of heart for money and she gets a brighter shape as the mother of Vasantasena. The youthful charming daughter has been so long a medium to gratify her lust for money, but now she feels a mother's affection and does everything to see that the chosen man of her daughter is not killed. Shudraka's sympathetic treatment of a socially much-hated character of an old procuress frees her from all her professional blemishes and the woman becomes a lovable character.

We have also a sort of passing reference to the brother of Vasantasena in the fourth act who is a typical parasite indulging in various luxuries. Maitreya makes a sarcastic remark about the fellow as to how much penance is required to be born as the brother of Vasantasena.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶. *Mricchakatika* IV. 28. 51 ff

4

SHUDRAKA'S HUMOUR

Humour is a particular quality that makes a literary composition, especially of the dramatic form, attractive to the readers or spectators. Unlike in Western literature where we have wit, humour and satire used with a view to creating laughter, comical relief or dramatic interest, in Sanskrit literature we get all such elements covered by the one designation *laughter* or *hasya-rasa*. According to the *Natyashastra* love or *shringara* originates the *hasya-rasa*¹ and generally the low characters are the substratums (*alambana-vibhava*) and the absurdities in human life are the excitants (*uddipana-vibhava*) of the sentiment of *laughter*. Punning on words, twisting of words in dialogues, queer situations, out-of-the-way characterisations etc. are some of the forms in which the humour is employed by writers. In most cases in a Sanskrit drama the humour centres round the character of the Jester but Shudraka's humour does not confine itself to any particular character. As we have already noted² humour is one of the three remarkable qualities in the writing of Shudraka and as a matter of fact Shudraka's celebrity and distinctiveness as a dramatist depend much on his creating of humour through various channels on a refined level. 'It is never coarse or vulgar and is far removed in this respect from the so-called humour of *Bhanas* and similar pieces, in which licentious jokes run riot and are the pivots on which their interest depends'³. It will not be any exaggeration to observe that Shudraka has exhibited his excellent capacity in presenting humour which is by far the best, impressive and more varied than what we experience in any other Sanskrit work.

1. *Natyashastra* VI.

2. See *supra*

3. Kale *ibid* Intro. p. 51

The drama takes up the life and society as they are and the dramatist focusses on the varying human moods and diversified nature, oddities and incongruities of manners and customs, our external behaviour and social or cultural environments we are associated with. Shudraka takes full advantage of the dramatic form and its characteristic features to point out the follies and idiosyncracies of Shakara, the gamblers' passion for the play of dice, state officials' quarrel over racial superiority etc., and these are all causes of genuine laughter. According to Bharata⁴ humour is 'generated by absurdities - absurdities of time, place and action, and in Shudraka we find these cases quite well. It is our common experience that our movements, human complexities and shortcomings as also queer actions in all seriousness often generate the humour and Shudraka has fully used his characters to bring before us this element in all naturalness and variety. He has created attractive situations with witty words, twisted expressions and even through irritated actions and sentiments providing enjoyable humour. He does not depend on his Jester alone to produce a stereotyped laughter in us but makes almost all his men and women, the executioners being no exception in the matter, to give us a refreshing relief from tense situations or prolonged scenes. He has proved himself to be a keen observer of men and the world and strengthened by his intellectual liveliness he has brought in such attractive humour in his play. Ryder's observation in this regard is quite apt. He thinks that the humour of Shudraka 'runs the whole gamut, from grim to farcical, from satirical to quaint. Its variety and keenness are such that king Shudraka need not fear a comparison with the greatest writers of comedies'.⁵

Shudraka has not used his humour at random to make his play, a brilliant composition, a cheap and light production only to provide fun but has exercised his skill in creating humour in a judicious manner to provide relief from the effects of tragic or grave situations. It serves as a stimulus to the spectators who might have been mentally tired or suffering from the horror or pains from incidents. His humour is thus not just for the sake of humour or comical elements but is a welcome necessity to remove the constraints of the situations. It is spontaneous and natural and that is why so much attractive and enjoyable.

We have seen that a rhetorician like Vamana has referred⁶ to the skill of Shudraka in the use of puns and we will have occasions to see

4. *Natyashastra*, VI

5. Ryder, *ibid* xxii

6. See *supra*

that Shudraka does not base his humour only on intelligent play of words, or references to eatables which is but characteristic of a gluttonous Jester in other dramas, or distortion of mythological references and repetition of synonyms which abound in Shakara's speech, or common ignorance of certain people, but his situations and superb characterisation have also to contribute much to the success of his skill in humour. His treatment of humour is a welcome balance between pain and pleasure, suffering and enjoyment. From the very beginning of the composition, from the Prologue itself, Shudraka gives evidence of his skill in the treatment of humour with common human weakness and psychology, and they are so natural. The hungry Stage-manager enquires of his wife if anything is there for him to eat. The wife gives a list of food articles, supposed to be available in the home for him to eat, the Stage-manager having expressed his surprise that so many eatables could be there in store in the home of a poor man like him, the wife makes a fun with him that all these items are indeed available but in the shop.⁷ The husband curses the wife for causing disappointment after raising hopes. The husband learns that the wife is to offer a meal to a Brahmin after a religious vow observed by her with a view to getting a handsome husband in the next birth. The Stage-manager becomes furious and addresses the spectators pointing out the inconsiderate action of the lady wishing for a husband in the next birth and that at his cost!⁸ The situations are natural and expressive of psychological reactions of common men which evoke laughter in us. This element of fun and laughter pervades the whole composition with a true atmosphere of humour.

The opening of the drama proper introduces Maitreya describing his happy days at the time of Charudatta's affluence and the words and expressions used by Maitreya as also his description of himself as a painter in action are all much amusing.⁹

Maitreya knows that the charitable disposition is the cause of his friend's poverty and he denounces the conduct of riches as resting with people who do not make use of their money. In his view the riches are very much like the cow-boys running from place to place to avoid the biting of wasps.¹⁰ We have a good portion of the first act

7. *Mricchakatika* 1.8. 30 ff

8. *Mricchakatika* 18.58

9. *Mricchakatika* 1.8.97 ff

10. *Mricchakatika* 1.12.1

covered by Shakara and his associates and there we enjoy the Shakarian words, use of mythological references in a distorted manner and his approach to love. He refers to Ashvatthaman as born of Kunti by Rama and Kunti is said to have been under the control of Ravana etc. He uses the mythological personalities in similes at random which along with typical Shakarian tautology and use of redundant words create some enjoyable moments for us. Shakara describes the courtesan Vasantasena with ten epithets which are derogatory in real sense and still he wonders that the woman does not want him.¹¹ The dialogue between Maitreya and Shakara on the present condition of Charudatta and his future prospects give us some interesting moments.¹² The infuriated Maitreya angrily raises a wooden staff to challenge the wicked Shakara at the manhandling of Radanika with the words, 'in its own shelter even a dog gets terrifying, then what to tell about me a Brahmin'!¹³

The second act provides us with some really enjoyable specimens of humour illustrating the three types of it expressed by action, diction and physical appearances. The superintendent of the state gambling house, Mathura and his associate, chase Samvahaka to realise from him ten gold coins he owes to the gambling house. To save himself Samvahaka enters a deserted temple with steps backwards and takes the place of the deity. Mathura and his associate intelligently find out that the gambler Samvahaka must have entered the temple but they do not get the run-away gambler there. They shake up the deity who is in fact Samvahaka, in various ways, and thinking the deity to be a wooden image decide to play at dice there itself. It becomes difficult for Samvahaka to stand there as the deity restraining himself from the game. When the two gamblers were discussing about whose turn would be next to throw the dice Samvahaka jumped on the board claiming that it would be now his turn to play. He is caught and assaulted when Samvakaka wants to pay off the dues by selling himself away. No buyer turns up and he is again assaulted. At that time comes to the scene Darduraka, another gambler, and asks Mathura to free Samvahaka. After an altercation Darduraka and Mathura are engaged in a tussle dealing blows at each other. Mathura threatens Darduraka who observes that Mathura 'would see' if Dardurka is beaten by

11. *Mricchakatika* I. 23

12. *Mricchakatika* I. 50 ff

13. *Mricchakatika* I. 42. 17

Mathura in the court. Mathura retorts 'I shall see' to which Darduraka asks 'how would you see'.¹⁴ Expanding his eyes Mathura says 'Thus would I see', and Darduraka takes his chance to throw dust into the eyes of Mathura who falls down giving an opportunity to Samvahaka to slip away. Later when Vasantasena gives the gamblers her golden bracelet in full settlement of Samvahaka's debt an overjoyed Mathura makes a friendly offer to Samvahaka to come and play again.

The scene of the gamblers is a remarkable composition in which we get plenty of wit and humour, action presenting moments of enjoyments. Words and expressions used in this scene create a laughter in us and the situations created in the temple with Samvahaka as the deity etc. cannot allow us to sit with grave faces. In every part of this act beginning with interesting dialogue between Madanika and her lady or ending with Vasantasena's attitude towards Samvahaka and Karnapuraka, we have best types of wit and humour.

The episode of burglary in the third act gives us a humour of different variety. Sharvilaka's action in the scene and his words with a dreaming Maitreya cannot but evoke laughter. It is amusing for us when the burglar speaks of the various qualities of a sacred thread and uses his own as the measuring tape for his own action in creating the hole.¹⁵ Maitreya's self-praising about his intelligent action in handing over the *trust* of Vasantasena to his friend as well as his distorted sentence that 'having made a thief the hole has run away' make us enjoy an otherwise grave situation. The fourth act is like a continuation of the third act when Sharvilaka comes to the mansion of Vasantasena in order to get the release of Madanika against the stolen ornaments. Vasantasena overhears the dialogue between Madanika and Sharvilaka and knows the source of the ornaments to be given to her. She reacts in a favourable manner and responds intelligently. When Sharvilaka offers her the ornaments in the name of Charudatta she hands over Madanika to Sharvilaka with the words that it is being done according to the instructions of Charudatta that whoever will bring the ornaments should be given the hands of Madanika.¹⁶ A bewildered Sharvilaka praises the virtues of Charudatta and leaves the scene. The scene with Sharvilaka and Madanika, and afterwards with Vasantasena, is so enjoyable right from the beginning when Sharvilaka out of a jealousy,

14. *Mricchakatika* II. 13. 24 ff.

15. *Mricchakatika* III 15. ff

16 *Mricchakatika* IV. 21. 27

which appears to be natural in the context, makes some crushing comments against Madanika and the womenfolk and even wants to kill Charudatta. The scene becomes more amusing when Maitreya approaches Vasantasena with the jewel-necklace of the wife of Charudatta as the recompense for her casket, falsely representing that the ornaments have been lost by Charudatta in gambling. By now Vasantasena knows the whole background and we along with her enjoy very much the turn of events. These incidents have been so interestingly interwoven that we cannot for a moment doubt anything unnatural in the humorous setting of the scenes, and Shudraka's skill in creating humour even under grave situations becomes evident. Even when Shudraka describes the big mansion of Vasantasena his touches of wit and humour are not wanting. We are amused to hear Maitreya, when he sees the brother of Vasantasena decorated with ornaments and moving under the influence of liquor, observing that how much penance one should practise to become a brother of Vasantasena!¹⁷ Maitreya's observation about the mother of the courtesan causes more laughter. The mother is described as a female goblin with a great expanse of the belly and Maitreya wonders if the house was constructed after putting her inside!¹⁸ The dialogue between the attendant of Vasantasena and Maitreya in the fifth act shows Shudraka's skill in creating humour with witty words and puns. Any rendering of the Prakrit words and expressions used in the dialogue takes away much of the force and attractiveness of the humour. The sound-effects of the Prakrit words here are the sources of our enjoyment and this cannot be derived through any rendering!¹⁹ The attendant announces the arrival of his mistress: Hallo, here is she. Maitreya enquires, who this, who? The attendant repeats the words and Maitreya being not able to follow blurts forth: What the hell for which you are making this hissing sound like a beggar in times of scarcity? The attendant is intelligent and retorts: Why are you crowing like a crow in this manner! Simply by sound-effects the scene has become really enjoyable for us. Witty application of words and puns has made the following part of the dialogue between the two more humorous and lively. The attendant informs of the arrival of Vasantasena not in a direct way but with the help of some intellectual use of words. The attendant asks Maitreya:

17. *Mricchakatika* IV. 28.57

18. *Mricchakatika* IV. 29.10

19. *Mricchakatika* V. 11.32 ff.

At what time do the mango trees blossom forth? Taking the help of his friend Maitreya replies: In spring i.e., the *Vasanta* season. The attendant asks further: Who gives protection to prosperous villages? Helped again by his friend Maitreya answers: The Army i.e., *senā*. The attendant then tells Maitreya to put these two words together and utter. Maitreya puts the second expression first and responds: *senavasanta*. The attendant advises Maitreya to utter again by turning round, obviously he intends to get the expressions turned round the other way as *vasanta senā*, but the dull-headed Maitreya does not follow him correctly and utters the words in the same order by turning himself round physically. The attendant tells him not to turn himself round physically but to turn the *padas* i.e., words the other way. The *Vidusaka* understands *padas* not as words but as *feet* and turns his feet around and utters the same expression *senavasanta*. Maitreya is then asked not to turn his feet around but to turn the word-formations the other way, and now following correctly he learns that Vasantasena has arrived!²⁰ It is possible to see some crudeness in these cases compared with the other subtle touches of humour, nevertheless these occasions are sure to put the audience into hilarity! Humour based on puns and situations, however, respond to our intellect and we have the best form of humour. We notice a plenty of verbal wit in the composition and Maitreya gives us most of such cases. Maitreya makes fun of a woman reading Sanskrit as compared with a young cow snorting under a new nose-string. Here again the sound-effect has an important bearing.²¹ He is also not in favour of a man singing who is like an old priest muttering *mantras* having a garland of dried up flowers.²² His observations about Vasantasena's brother and mother may be remembered in this connection. His sarcastic remarks are no doubt biting but they are real cases of wit indicating the incongruities of our life. Maitreya is a source of laughter even under serious situations as in the law-court scene, but his witty and humorous remarks give us a practical truth of life and society.

In the sixth act we have interesting play of words and actions causing laughter under grave situations. The two state-officials, Viraka and Chandanaka, turn hostile to each other and are engaged in hot exchange of words. It is indeed amusing to note how they²³ point to the parentage

20 *Mricchakatika* V.11.54 ff.

21 *Mricchakatika* III.3.3

22. *loc cit.*

23 *Mricchakatika* VI 20 24 ff.

of each other. Chandanaka takes the offensive attitude first, and says 'adorable you are and you do not remember your own lineage' gesticulating the act of sharpening a razor-blade indicating thereby that Viraka comes of a barber's family. An infuriated Viraka does not take this humiliation lying down and retorts 'you too so adorable, do not remember your own lineage' and retaliates by making signs of a shoe-maker to which family Chandanaka belongs. In the seventh act we find the Vidusaka again adding to the store of verbal wits in the drama. He replies to Charudatta asking him to assist Vasantasena to alight : Are her feet bound by chains that she cannot get down herself',—the sound-effect of the Prakrit word for *foot*, i.e., *godda*, adds to the force of the wit.²⁴ He, however, peeps into the cart and informs Charudatta that 'here is a Mr. Vasantasena and not the lady Vasantasena'. Maitreya's joking makes us enjoy the situation. The eighth act is one of the most serious acts but here also we get good comical elements provided by the words and actions of Shakara, his associate and Sthavaraka, Shakara's attendant. It is really funny when Shakara asks his attendant to get the cart to him through the wall of the garden, no matter if the cart is broken and the oxen die or the attendant perishes in the process. Shakara tells that in such an eventuality he will make a new cart, get a new pair of oxen and will go for another attendant. Poor Sthavarka cannot but exclaim that everything would turn all right but he would lose himself.²⁵ The situation is really interesting with enjoyable words and actions and the encounter between the monk and Shakara reveals the depth of Shakara's cunningness as well as his wickedness and cruelty giving some moments of fun at the same time. He knows fully that water cannot remain clear if mud is poured into it but he puts such a queer condition on the release of the monk : Let him throw mud in a way that the water is not muddy or let him throw water in the mud.²⁶ He finds fault with the monk that he did not take to renunciation immediately after his birth.²⁷ Words of Shakara at different stages in the act are full of funs and are of amusing nature, but the dialogues between Shakara and his associate and between Shakara and Sthavaraka are lively and full of humour under serious conditions.

24. *Mricchakatika* VII. 4. 13

25. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 14. 33 ff.

26. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 5. 24 ff.

27. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 5. 3

The devilish Shakara is determined to kill Vasantasena and at first asks his parasite-associate to do the job for him. With his cultured mind he declines and observes: In case I kill this innocent woman, by what boat shall I cross to the other world!²⁸ Amusing us in no less manner the rascal replies that he would make him a raft. Seeing his associate afraid of being found out by sylvan deities or by the Moon or by the Sun etc. the knave makes a humorous suggestion to kill Vasantasena by screening her with the garment and then none would see him in his action.²⁹ Having failed in his effort to persuade his associate the rogue then turns to his attendant Sthavaraka and asks him to do the job for him. He tries to tempt his servant with words in a novel way creating a scene with good humour and the servant replies to his master in the same manner, and we have a most enjoyable situation. Shakara addresses his attendant : Dear son, Sthavaraka, my attendant, I shall give you gold bracelets.

Sthavaraka replies : I shall also put them on.

'I shall have a golden stool made for you.'

'I shall also sit on it.'

'I shall give you all the food remaining in my dish.'

'I too shall eat them.'

'I shall make you the chief of my servants.'

'Master, I shall become the Chief gladly.'

Even after all such offers of advantages and privileges Sthavaraka does not agree to act according to his Master's bidding.

In the ninth act we find an arrogant Shakara proposing to take his seat on the head of the Judge and then actually sits on the ground to establish his claim that the whole area belong to him. We are amused to know from Shakara that no eye-disease will occur to him in the next birth who witnesses his enemy being killed in the present existence! Shakara finds a large number of people following Charudatta led to the southern cemetery and his spontaneous expression at the sight speaks of his vanity, but at the same time it is certainly adding to our fun. He wonders how many people would gather around if a person of his position is led to the gallows, when such a huge gathering is here to witness the penniless Charudatta being taken to be impaled!³⁰

28. *Mricchakatika* VIII 23

29. *Mricchakatika* VIII 23. 1 ff

30. *Mricchakatika* X. 29. 9

The remarks of the simple unsophisticated executioners sympathising with the condemned Charudatta and his little son are no less humorous and even the words, actions or gestures of different character appearing in the tenth act offer some subtle touches of humour.

It is true that Shudraka does not create humour through any particular character³¹ but it cannot be denied that the two characters Maitreya and Shakara contribute most to the creation of humour in this play by their words, actions, similes and even when they come to blows in the court-hall. Shakara is undoubtedly the most contemptible character in Sanskrit literature, nevertheless he is responsible for some best and most enjoyable scenes of fun and humour. His absurd similes are highly amusing and one has to burst into laughter to listen to his highly confused references. Observations of Maitreya are serious but humorous and he is capable of making us laugh even when he is so serious in his approach. His similes are from practical life and hit his objective successfully. Shudraka reigns supreme in the field of humour in Sanskrit literature.

31. See *supra*

5

SHUDRAKA'S SOCIETY

Contemporary Society in all its aspects,—social, religious, economic and even political, is reflected very much in literary productions of any time or clime since no author can rise above the impact of his age and environments. Literature is generally considered as the mirror of a particular society of a particular time and in this respect again a dramatic composition tells us of the contemporary life more convincingly. In the actions and words of the characters in a drama we generally get a fairly authentic picture of the society of the time and Shudraka's composition is undoubtedly a rich source of information concerning Indian life of the period in which Shudraka flourished. As a matter of fact Shudraka himself has informed in the Prologue of the topics he has dealt with in his unique composition. An affair of love-enjoyment between Charudatta, the young but poor and virtuous Brahmin merchant of the city of Avanti and the courtesan Vasantasena, like the beauty of spring, is said to be the theme of the play, and while depicting this affair Shudraka claims to have delineated among other things the progress of state-craft, the miscarriage of justice, the nature of villains and the inevitable course of destiny. Shudraka has actually made a treatment of all the topics and through it has presented before us a picture of the life and society of the time of Shudraka. Sylvain Levi, however, sounds a discordant note in that the Indian society never resembled the picture of the society that Shudraka's composition brings before us¹. There are scholars also who find it difficult to accept the view of Levi after an examination of all available data on the subject². It is indeed difficult to gainsay that Shudraka's *Mricchakatika*

1. In Kale, *Mricchakatika* (Edn) Intro. p. 59 f.n. Karmarkar *Mricchakatika* (Edn), xxiii

2. *Op.cit*

and Dandin's *Dashakumaracharita* are the two major Sanskrit works of early Christian era which provide us with the most detailed information about their respective times. As a drama of invention, the *prakarana*-type, Shudraka's drama has to be based on facts and realities of life and as Kale points out correctly, 'it is but natural that we see therein an exact reflex of the conditions and manners of contemporary society, including its government and its laws in particular'.³ A critical analysis of the composition will convince us that the drama 'brings into clear, and bold relief as no other Indian drama does... the Indian society of that age before our eyes,...'⁴ and we may take the drama as 'a sort of looking-glass for the age and society it depicts'⁵... Shudraka has created large number of men and women, some generally human and others peculiarly indigenous, with all their virtues and vices, with all human follies and qualities. We cannot imagine of a golden age when everything has turned out to be good and meritorious and Shudraka has been realistic in his approach to his characters with correct perspectives.

The society in Shudraka's time certainly recognises the four divisions of the age-old caste-system in which the *brahmins* are most respected and honoured with some social privileges sanctioned by the law. A Brahmin murderer enjoys protection by law against capital punishment⁶ and even a burglar would not rob a Brahmin of his wealth.⁷ A Brahmin not accepting any gift or charity is considered to be pure and of the highest order.⁸ They have the exclusive right to study the Vedas⁹ and a woman uttering Sanskrit words is ridiculed¹⁰ perhaps indicating some sort of restriction in the study of Sanskrit by women in the set-up of the society. Caste-system certainly appears to have a strong bearing on the society but it is also clear that birth has not been the determining factor about one's profession or status in the society. Charudatta comes of a Brahmin's family but his grandfather is reported to have taken to the profession of a tradesman and he himself has become the head of the guild. Shudraka has been remarkable in making

3. Kale, *loc. cit.*

4. N.K. Chattopadhyay, *Mricchakatika—A Study*, P. 12

5. *Op. cit.*

6. *Mricchakatika* IX 39

7. *Mricchakatika* IV. 6

8. *Mricchakatika* III. 18. 21

9. *Mricchakatika loc. cit.*

10. *Mricchakatika* III. 3. 5

a bold interpretation of the caste-division to show that anyone can go for the profession of his choice and enjoy high places by sheer merit. We find Viraka and Chandanaka belong to lower strata of society but have distinguished themselves as high state-officials. Barber and cobbler by birth they enjoy ranks usually held by the *kshatriyas*. The low-born *chandalas* of Shudraka do not consider themselves to belong to the despised class but affirms them to be *chandalas* who are sinful and put a noble-man like Charudatta into difficulty.¹¹ Belonging to the highest class in the set-up Charudatta does not hesitate to ask for a favour from these men of the lowest class whom he considers better persons than the *kshatriya* king. These liberal and unconventional traits of the social set-up in such an ancient time do not conform to the traditional approach and that might have made Levi consider the society of Shudraka as an imaginary one.

Whatever qualities of head and heart they might possess the slaves and courtesans have to carry with them the stains of their life and bondage. A most noble, refined and virtuous Vasantasena has to suffer so much because of the stain she has from her birth in a prostitute's family. Her beauty and wealth, her nobility and morality have earned her the merit of a jewel,¹² but even then she has been considered as a creeper growing by the road-side and as a well from where all can drink water or as a boat which has to accept any passenger on it.¹³ So strong is the sentiment against her belonging to a family of courtesan that she has no entry to the inner apartment of Charudatta nor even her ornaments can be taken inside. Vasantasena strives hard and toils sincerely to raise herself above all blemishes and taints associated with the house of a prostitute, and it is a remarkable achievement on her part, indicating a really bright side of the society and the state, that she is conferred the most coveted title of a legally wedded wife (*vadhu*) of Charudatta. In modern times we have such instances in our society but that such an idea could occur to a dramatist of such an ancient time against an orthodox Indian society speaks a lot in favour of an open and liberal social set-up!

Sthavaraka, the slave, and Madanika, the slave-girl, are two instances which show the life of disadvantage that a slave has to live in this society. In spite of all the affectionate relationship and the

11. *Mricchakatika* X. 22

12. *Mricchakatika* I. 32. 9

13. *Mricchakatika* I. 32

confidence she enjoys with her mistress Madanika does not have the freedom to enjoy her love and a romantic life in her own way. Sthavaraka suffers from the tragedy of his social position when he fails in his sincere effort to save Charudatta. None believes in his statement of facts and Shakara wins his game against him when everybody knows what type of a rogue his master is!

Of the two classes, the warrior-class (the *kshatriya*) and the traders (the *vaishyas*) we do not have much references or information and the *shudras* have been represented by the slaves, the executioners etc. The *kshatriyas* and the *vaishyas* seem to have their own rights and privileges in the society and the position of the *shudras* is vindicated by the statements of the *chandalas* and the slaves who are definitely downtrodden. A *kayastha* does not appear to have formed a class or caste by itself. He is a scribe assisting the Judge in a law-court and does not perhaps enjoy a favourable standing with the society or the community at large. Charudatta describes the law-court as the abode of serpents in the form of the *kayastha*,¹⁴ and it is not understandable how the *kayastha*, only a professional title for scribes, could earn such a bad name in the society. It might be possible that the scribes in law-courts were after illegal gratification harassing the disputing parties with a delay in justice and thus exposed themselves as cruel by nature!

In any ancient society slavery is a common feature and in Shudraka's society also there are male and female slaves. Though they are generally treated by their masters in a friendly way they do not have any position of dignity. They have the opportunity to get freed by paying off a ransom or at the sweet will of the owners. Sometimes the slaves are found to have good understanding of their owners' attitude. Varddhamanaka is appreciative of Charudatta's nobility and courtesy towards his slaves,¹⁵ Radanika seems to have become one with the family of Charudatta and Madanika is very much a confidante of her mistress and even takes some liberty with Vasantasena.¹⁶

It is a patriarchal society where family is the smallest unit. Women in the family have the dignity and respectability and Vasantasena is pining to obtain the status of a *vadhu*. Madanika earns for herself this title by virtue of her marriage with Sharvilaka who says that the title is not so easy to attain.¹⁷ There is, however, no reference to any

14. *Mricchakatika* IX. 14

15. *Mricchakatika* III. 1. ff

16. *Mricchakatika* VI. 0. 20

17. *Mricchakatika* IV. 24

sacramental marriage performed between Sharvilaka and Madanika or between Charudatta and Vasantasena although the form seems to have existed as indicated by the reference to the sacred fire at the marriage ceremony.¹⁸ We have also references to bride and bridegroom.¹⁹ The society is a polygamous one and Charudatta takes a second wife, and it is possible to hold that women in this society have a secondary position. Loyalty to her husband, who is her ornament is not only the highest virtue, but to die with him in the funeral pyre is her highest merit. Sharvilaka's tirade against the women-folk²⁰ is generated by human psychological jealousy, nevertheless it speaks of an attitude of men towards women in the society. Certainly it does not speak well of a society which allows extra-marital relations for men²¹ and where illegitimate progeny like the *bandhulas* exist!²²

Two kinds of garment, one for the upper and another for the lower part of the body, are generally known, but the upper garment seems to have been put on by the rich usually fragrant with perfume. Dresses of different colours, properly dyed and washed, and shining dresses are put on by influential personalities and Vasantasena in the first scene seems to have worn a silken garment. Vasantasena's brother is clad with a silken cloak²³ and her mother has a garment embroidered with flowers.²⁴ Women wear shoes and uses umbrella generally held by an umbrella-keeper for fashionable women. We hear about various ornaments of gold, jewels, pearls, coral and other precious stones for women in the society and the description of the sixth chamber of Vasantasena in the fourth act gives us a good idea about the ornaments of those days. Vasantasena has ear-rings that dangle against her cheeks and is seen as wearing anklets and other decorative articles that have tinkling sound. Rich and fashionable men wear rings as indicated by Charudatta feeling his ringfinger to reward Karnapuraka for his commendable feat in the second act. A gold-bracelet seems to have been another ornament for the male members of the society and Shakara as well as the brother of Vasantasena have decorations of various ornaments.

18. *Mricchakatika* VI. 16

19. *Mricchakatika* VI. 4

20. *ibid.* IV. 9 ff

21. e.g. relationship between Charudatta and Vasantasena

22. *Mricchakatika* IV. 28.

23. *Mricchakatika* IV. 28. 51

24. *Mricchakatika* IV. 29. 1

Cosmetics are popular and toilet-box is used to keep valuable ornaments and perfumery articles. A kind of lac-juice (*alaktaka*) is used as decoration for the feet of women and flowers decorate their hairs. Various kinds of articles like sandal-paste, saffron, musk and other fragrant mixture-like pastes are rubbed for a good skin and trained masseurs are employed to take care of the body. It is from the jasmine-scented upper garment of her hero that Vasantasena gets emboldened to cultivate affairs with him since he does not appear to be indifferent to the pleasures of youth.

Playing at dice is a very popular pastime and the lively and interesting description on the game in the second act has perhaps no parallel in Sanskrit literature. We hear of a state gambling-house and an association of gamblers whose unwritten bond controls and guides the proceedings of the gambling-house, none can escape with dues on his account! The head of the gambling-house has the right to punish an escaping defaulter and the law of the land is with him in the matter. To indulge in gambling is no crime and a noble-man of Charudatta's standing unhesitatingly declares to have lost the deposited ornaments of Vasantasena in gambling. One of the most important diversions playing at dice seems to have much attraction with the people. To a gambler the rattle of dice is as sweet as cuckoo's voice²⁵ and its irresistible attraction is clearly exemplified in the scene at the abandoned temple.²⁶ We learn about some technical names for the throws of dice,²⁷ like *treta* (tre), *deuce* (*pavara*), *ace* (*nardita*), *four* (*kata*) etc. as also some figurative names for some dice are given, viz., *gardhavi* which kicks the gambler like an ass or *shakti* which overthrows like a magic missile.²⁸

An idea of food articles and food items of the time is available in the drama. In the Prologue we have a picture of the festive activities in the house of the Stage-Manager where the house-wife (*nati*) speaks of rice boiled with molasses, ghee, curd etc. and again the spacious kitchen of Vasantasena in the fourth act is said to have contained various kinds of food articles. Rice is the staple food which has different kinds and preparations. The type of rice known as *shali* is favourable with the rich and *tandula* seems to be the type of rice in general. Various

25. *Mricchakatika*, II. 6

26. *op. cit.*

27. *loc. cit.*

28. *op. cit.*

kinds of spices like cumin-seed, orris-root, ginger, black-pepper powder are used for preparation of food-items. Taking of soup and vegetables are indicated. Fish and meat are items of food and Brahmins also partake of meat. Meat is cooked with spices and made pungent and sour.²⁹ People cook boiled rice at night in the cold season to be used the next day. Pumpkin is preserved for future use with its stalk besmeared with cow-dung and dried vegetables and meat are preserved for the future. Shakara gives a list³⁰ of food items he has partaken of on the day Charudatta is taken to be impaled. He says that he has taken meal with pungent and sour meat, rice, vegetables, soup with fish, boiled *shali*-rice and rice mixed with molasses. The meat-eating people in South India even today are in the habit of taking pungent and sour meat.

Both men and women in the society drink wine which is mentioned with different names like *sidhu*, *madira*, *sura*, *asava* etc *Apanaka* is the name of drinking booth or party and a red-raddish after breaking its top is eaten by the wine-drinkers with relish.³¹ It is known to the people that excessive drinking of wine makes one enormously fat as has been the case with Vasantasena's mother.

Monarchical government is the form of administration and the king wields unlimited power sometimes to the extent of being an autocrat. Shakara's threat of removing the Judge indicates the king's control of the Judiciary in which Judges can be removed or appointed by the wish of the king. The statement of the Judge that his authority is only on the legal decision of a suit whereas the sentence to be pronounced rests with the king³² speaks of the king's power over judicial administration. The newly crowned king Aryaka with a writ of the law confers on Vasantasena the honour of a legally-wedded wife.

In the preservation of security and in the defence of the state the king is assisted by an Army. There is a system of espionage with the spies serving as the eyes of the king³³ to detect political offenses. Fortification is maintained to guard the country from external aggression or political unrest. We hear of a rampart running round the city having suitable posts for watching suspicious movements.³⁴ In

29. *ibid.* X. 29

30. *loc. cit*

31. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 3. 21

32. *Mricchakatika* IX. 38. 21

33. *Mricchakatika* VII. 8

34. *Mricchakatika* VI. 5. ff

addition to a regular police force sentry-posting is provided at all possible entrances to the city and watchful moving guards move around at nights along the roads. Police and Military officers of various categories keep a constant vigil on roads for security against any possible movement against the state. In *Viraka* we find an officer loyal to the core following the letters of the command of his king. He boasts of not even giving any quarter to his father in the discharge of his official duties. Chandanaka, on the other hand, is certainly loyal and dutiful but some time acts according to the dictates of his conscience. He does not find it possible to reveal the identity of Aryaka in the cart of Charudatta lest a noble man of Charudatta's standing gets under the wrath of the king and is in difficulty on this score. Both these types of officials are found even in present day administrative machinery. In our ancient dramas we find the position of the Superintendent of Police being held by the king's brother-in-law as we have it in this drama or in the *Abhijnana Shakuntalam*.

A Municipal system must have been in vogue to look after the roads or squares or the king's high way which are all mentioned in the *Play*. Public buildings like assemblies, gambling houses, lakes, wells, gardens and the like must have been looked after by an organised system. Collection of taxes at the time is indicated by Charudatta's reference to the tax-collectors in the form of bees.³⁵ State revenue mainly depends on the collection of taxes and gambling has been an important source of revenue. Tax is levied on the sale and purchase of commodities with revenue officers looking after the collection. Shudraka gives us a picture of a rich, elegant and luxurious Ujjayini with a good measure of economic prosperity. There is a night-life,³⁶ state-owned gambling house, adventurous courtesans,—which are all indicative of a prosperous economic life. References to food articles of rice and spices etc³⁷ indicate a flourishing agriculture but trade and commerce have been perhaps good sources of economic prosperity. Trade by land and sea is known as *Maitreya* refers to sailing sea-vessels.³⁸ Young tradesmen move from country to country to amass wealth. *Samvahaka* confesses to have been lured away from home to travel to a distant Ujjayini to seek fortune.³⁹ A developed textile

35. *Mricchakatika* VII. 1

36. Cf. *Mricchakatika* I

37. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 13-14

38. *Mricchakatika* IV. 30. 8

39. *Mricchakatika* II. 14. 31

industry provides good shining colourful dresses and in the leather industry are engaged a class of people for making shoes. Separate residential areas are inhabited by people of different professions and we find the Brahmin Charudatta living in the area of the guild as a tradesman. The people living on agriculture generally live in villages protected by soldiers posted there.⁴⁰

Shudraka's society is guided by the Vedic religion. Vedic rituals are known and gods like Brahma, Vishnu, Hara, Indra, Shiva or Rudra are popular and worshipped in private or public places. The worship of the god of love is very much in vogue and it is at the temple of the god that Vasantasena has the first sight of her hero and she feels a great attachment for him! The offering of Charudatta to the Divine Mothers⁴¹ indicate a Tantrik form of belief and worship current at the time side by side with the Vedic and Puranic forms. Animal sacrifice is in vogue and we find Charudatta describing himself as a goat being led to the sacrificial post to be slaughtered⁴² while the king Palaka is said to have been killed like an animal offered in the sacrificial hall.⁴³

Shudraka has provided us with a detailed and realistic picture about the judicial administration of the day. We have already referred to the absolute power of the king in deciding about the type of punishment to be inflicted on a criminal.⁴⁴ The task of finding out the truth or otherwise of a complaint is the responsibility of the Judge who conducts the trial with the assistance of a Guild-chief and a scribe, both of whom are Court-officials. The duty and responsibility of the Judge as well as the difficult and complicated nature of his task have been shown by our dramatist in an impressive manner.⁴⁵ Any complaint is examined by circumstantial evidences and evidences given by the witnesses. No accused person is to be taken as guilty unless and until the guilt is proved by the evidences. The accused gets full scope and opportunity to put his arguments in defence and it appears to be necessary to have a confession from the accused before a verdict is given.⁴⁶ If it is felt that the accused is non-cooperating or obstructing the course of law

40. *Mricchakatika* V. 11. 55

41. *Mricchakatika* I. 35. 7

42. *Mricchakatika* X. 21

43. *ibid.* X. 52

44. *See supra*

45. *Mricchakatika* IX. 3-5

46. *Mricchakatika* IX. 26 ff.

deliberately and does not confess the guilt the Judge may order the whipping of the accused to make him confess. In the absence of a direct proof a trial by ordeal may be resorted to detect the crime.⁴⁷ If an accused is condemned to death he is to be taken to the cemetery in red garments, garland of red flowers around the neck and red sandal-paste marked on the person. Such a criminal is either impaled or hanged or devoured by dogs or cut by a saw or may get his head removed by a sword.

Several types of legal crimes appear to have been in the society including a murder. A gambler avoiding to repay a debt has to get harsh treatment and is made to pay off the debt by any means. It is considered a serious offense against the State to shelter a political offender hostile to the king and anyone obstructing a royal officer in the discharge of his duty is liable to punishment by the king. The system of leading a condemned criminal with the stake on shoulders is supposed to be a corrective measure against a repetition of the same crime by other people. A condemned person has the chance of being released against a ransom offered by a generous personality, or as a result of revolution when the new king orders for the release of prisoners, or due to a consternation created by an elephant escaping from the chains that convicts behind the bars may get an opportunity for release.⁴⁸

The theory of transmigration and the doctrine of Karma have much influence on the people in general who have also full belief in the operation of the Fate as the guiding factor in the life of a man or woman. Fate is thought to be a sum-total of one's actions, it is an inexorable one and is dependent on the deeds done. Sufferings or enjoyments in life depend on the nature of one's activities in the previous birth, if he has earned merits in the previous he is to get the benefit in this birth through happiness and enjoyments, and his evil actions are to lead him to sufferings. We find the executioners referring to the chain of death and birth as nothing but change of garments.⁴⁹ With the example of the Sun and the Moon, falling and rising alternately in sky, they point out to the inevitability of the decree of Fate!⁵⁰ Closely associated with the belief in the theory of transmigration comes the

47. *Mricchakatika* (Edn.) Karmarkar, p. 485

48. *Mricchakatika* X. 33. 16

49. *Mricchakatika* X. 36

50. *Mricchakatika* X. 35. 11

belief in the existence of the *manes* and the obligations to be fulfilled by the annual offering of libations to them.⁵¹ Charudatta describes his son as the 'embodied image of the departed souls'.⁵²

The society appears to be predominantly Brahmanical but Buddhism has also been in a flourishing condition. Samvahaka has embraced Buddha's religion to get peace and Charudatta who is by birth a Brahmin and who belongs to the Brahmanical fold, to all intents and purpose, is referred to have generously contributed to the construction of *viharas* which should indicate the Buddhist monasteries.⁵³ There is a monastery for Buddhist nuns near the garden where Vasantasena is strangled by Shakara and later she is taken there by the Buddhist Samvahaka. A life of austerities and self-control for the Buddhist monks is indicated⁵⁴ by Samvahaka who is designated as a *bhikshu* and there seems to have existed a number of Buddhist monasteries in and around the country. Charudatta makes Samvahaka the Chief of all these monasteries.⁵⁵ In spite of all this there exists a strong sentiment of prejudice against the Buddhists in this society! It does not bring out any kind of hostility against the Buddhists, when Shakara, a veritable rogue as he is, treats Samvahaka, the *bhikshu*, so rudely and inflicts physical torture on him, because his nature and conduct are like that to behave in that way with anybody, be he a Buddhist or not! But Maitreya's reference to a *bhikkhu* among a host of others whose company is to be avoided is not at all a friendly remark and certainly expresses a sentiment against the Buddhists.⁵⁶ The sight of a *Shramana*, i.e., a Buddhist recluse, is considered inauspicious even by Charudatta!⁵⁷ Such contradictory state of affairs concerning the Buddhists indicate a time of struggle for supremacy between the two contending religions.

Private collection of various kinds of birds was perhaps a fashionable hobby with rich and aristocratic people of the society. Vasantasena maintains one such in her mansion where parrots and partridges have been taught to speak, pigeons have been trained to carry messages and quails learn how to fight with each other. These are also sources

51. *Mricchakatika* X. 17

52. *Mricchakatika* IX. 42

53. *Mricchakatika* IX. 30. 9

54. *Mricchakatika* VIII. 1. ff

55. *Mricchakatika* X. 58. 25

56. *Mricchakatika* V. 7.6

57. *Mricchakatika* VII. 9. 1

of amusement to the people who keep them. Musical performances are also held to entertain those who have love for music. Charudatta gives evidence of his knowledge in the science of music while appreciating the skill and performance of Rebhila. Different types of musical instruments are seen in the room of Charudatta and it seems music as a pastime of the day is cultivated by men of refined taste and culture.

Reading and writing are generally known and even the executioners are conversant with a kind of line-drawing to help their memory.⁵⁸ Legal proceedings are recorded and the gambling house also maintains a record of its account. General proficiency in art and painting exist among interested people and we are told about Vasantasena's skill in this branch.⁵⁹ We get an interesting description of a painter sitting with hundred cups of colours.⁶⁰ Paints and sometimes pictorial art decorate the main door of the house and floors in rooms are coloured and also set with designs made of precious stones. Images of deities are made with wood or stone and sculpture is in a developed state.

We get a picture of a remarkable development in architecture at the time of Shudraka. In Ujjayini itself exist a number of beautiful buildings which are attractive to all owing to the pomp and luxury they exhibit. Both Shakara and Vasantasena have large mansions. Shakara's mansion has a terrace on the gate while Vasantasena has decorated marble pillars with a front gate. Charudatta also owns a big house which is now in a dilapidated condition for want of maintenance. Charudatta's mansion is surrounded by a protection brick-wall with a side-door and there exists an open space between the outer wall and the main building. Stone, brick, wood and mud are essential materials in the construction of a house which has its wall in full-baked bricks. In various descriptions in the composition the dramatist has given us an idea about the town-planning in ancient India.

Contemporary life as we get it in the *Mricchakatika* gives us a good idea about the society in ancient India at the time of Shudraka. The picture of a rich, opulent, lively society is before us where people of all walks of life are busy in their respective jobs and duties. They enjoy life and are alert to the utmost in the discharge of their duties. The city of Ujjayini is gay and happy with a fully active social life.

58. *Mricchakatika* X. 33. 7

59. *Mricchakatika* IV. 0. 7

60. *ibid* 1. 8. 99

The people have a night-life when the highway gets crowded with wandering parasites, king's favourites, courtesans, servants and the like people. Shudraka has given us to understand that the society of his time has the vices and virtues, pleasures and sufferings, noble men and rogues, loyalists and conscientious men, all living and working side by side as we may possibly encounter with at any place in any country. Shudraka's depiction of the society is as much lively and attractive as his variety or power of characterisation or use of humour. His society has not been an ideal one but it has all the elements of being a real one and its presentation is in no way less important in its contribution to make the *Mricchakatika* an enjoyable drama.

APPENDIX

A NOTE ON THE PRAKRITS IN SHUDRAKA

Shudraka has created a large number of characters mostly drawn from the lower strata of the society and he has given a look of naturalness to them by allowing them to speak in their own unsophisticated tongue. As a result a large number of Prakrits and dialects find place in the drama and Shudraka with his superb dramatic and linguistic skills has made his attractive men and women communicate with his audience more forcefully and effectively. His variety in the use of the Prakrits coupled with his selection of a number of words of indigenous origin which respond so effectively to the intended sound and meaning, has endowed his composition with a quality rare in a Sanskrit drama! He has coined roots of local origin from popular dialects to get impressive words to suit his purpose. Expressions like *khangkhana*, a sharp sound resembling the sound produced by a cracked bell-metal, *khatkhatayate*, crackling, *ghulghulayamana*, a rattling sound, *tharatharedi*, shaking in fear, *phurphurayadi*, trembling violently, *bukkamanie*, barked at, *hulubhulim*, play false,—are some specimens of the words used by Shudraka to make the respective situations more graphic and pointed!

Besides Sanskrit, the central medium of the drama, Shudraka seems to have made use of seven types of Prakrits and dialects. The wealth of Prakrits found in the composition has prompted Keith¹ to observe : No extant play exhibits anything like the variety of Prakrits found in the *Mricchakatika* which seems almost as if intended to illustrate the precepts of the *Natyashastra* in this regard.¹ In a general way we may say that Shudraka's distribution of the Prakrits has been according to the direction of the *Natyashastra*, but he has not been guided strictly according to the *shastra*. He has ignored the Maharashtri held as the Prakrit *par excellence*, nor does he make his slaves and

1. *Sanskrit Drama*, p. 140

guildsmen use the Ardha-magadhi. It is also interesting to note that his Sutradhara speaks in Prakrit in the Prologue! It is only in Bhasa's Charudatta that we have a similar case. Shudraka must have been conscious of his deviation from the accepted theory and perhaps for this he offers an explanation through the Sutradhara : Here am I now to become a Prakrit-speaker owing to the exigency of my business and for the dramatic representation.²

As is but usual the Brahmin hero Charudatta, the cultured Vitas, Aryaka, 'the royal claimant',³ and Sharvilaka, the son of a Brahmin turned thief speak in Sanskrit. The commentator Prithvidhara has given us the names of the Prakrits and dialects as represented and also of those characters who speak them.⁴

Shauraseni, the ordinary Prakrit of a Sanskrit drama has been used in the drama by as many as twelve characters. After his exordium in Sanskrit the Sutradhara takes to Shauraseni Prakrit along with his wife. Among the characters in the drama Radanika, Madanika, the ceti, Vasantasena, Dhuta, Vasantasena's mother, Karnapuraka, the guildsman (the *Shresthin*) the officer of the court (the *Kayastha*), Shodhanaka also speak in Shauraseni which is nearest to classical Sanskrit. Magadhi, the other major literary Prakrit has been used by Samvahaka, Rohasena, the three servants and the monk. The characteristic features of the Shauraseni and the Magadhi have been discussed by all Prakrit grammarians. While the Shauraseni is the Prakrit of the *madhyadesha* the Magadhi is the Prakrit of the east. As in other Sanskrit plays the Jester Maitreya speaks in the Pracya dialect which arises from the Shauraseni and is generally used by prominent humorous figures like the Jester. The Pracya has the indications of being an eastern dialect of the main language, i.e., the Shauraseni. Prithvidhara marks out Viraka and Chandanaka as speaking the Avanti-*bhasha* which is an admixture of Maharashtra and Shauraseni. There is, however, a controversy over the exact type of the tongue used by Chandanaka. Pischel⁵ supported by Keith⁶ holds Chandanaka's speech to be Dakshinatya. There is also an opinion that the Avanti-*bhasha* is an admixture of Shauraseni and Pracya.⁷ In some quarters

2. *Mricchakatika* I 8 4

3. As used by Keith in *Sanskrit Drama*, p. 141

4. Cf. Prithvidhara's commentary on *Mricchakatika* introductory portion.

5. *Grammatik*, p. 26

6. *Sanskrit Drama*, p. 141

7. K.C. Acharya, Markandeyas' *Prakritasarvasvam*, Intro 9. 75

Avanti has been said to be used by such types of characters of mediocre rank like constables, Police officers, traders etc. in a drama.⁸ It is only in the *Prakritasarvasva* of Markandeya that we find the Avanti illustrated to show that the admixture of Shauraseni and Maharashtra occurs in the same sentence.⁹ The characteristics of this dialect as noted by Prithvidhara and Markandeya convince us of both Chandanaka and Viraka using the *Avanti-bhasha*. The idea of a Dakshinatya speech for Chandanaka seems to have come up from the observation of the speaker in Act VI : 'We Southerners have indistinct pronunciation' and then his plan to make up a quarrel in the manner of Karnata. The observations of Chandanaka should be taken as examples of his ready wit offering a plea to save Charudatta and Aryaka from a most difficult situation. We do not find Chandanaka using words of southern origin though he refers to a number of southern races,—rather his speech has resemblance with both Maharashtra and Shauraseni conforming to the nature of the origin of the *Avanti-bhasha*. Chandanaka's confession that he speaks indistinctly because of his being a southerner should be considered more as a pretext as indicated above than as a proof of his using the Dakshinatya speech. The Dakshinatya speech is a mixed form of speech with more of southern and Sanskrit words which do not hold out the features of the tongue used by Chandanaka. It seems that in general the Dakshinatya had been, like the Maharashtra, more or less a speech or form for literary composition.

The most interesting Prakrit or dialect that we have in use in the work of Shudraka is the Shakari used by the most colourful character of Prince Samsthanaka, better known as Shakara, the name given to him for his proneness to use only the sibilant *s*. Though his preference for the sibilant *s* makes the type of the character known as Shakara the dialect Shakari has been recognised and treated by grammarians. Evidently derived from the Magadhi it appears to be a sub-dialect of Magadhi, but its possibility of being a spoken dialect sometime or other cannot be ruled out. The dialect might have acquired such a name for being originally spoken by a particular class of foreign people known as the Shakas, who came from Central Asia to invade India some time before the beginning of the Christian era. This invading

8. *loc. cit.*

9. *ibid.* p. 125

race stayed on in this country and were later degraded to a lower status in the ancient society. A Shakara in a Sanskrit drama is a brother of an unmarried wife of the king and is said to have a low lineage. Thus the language of Shakara must have acquired a lower status as the absurd language of the worthless Samsthanaka of Shudraka indicates. It is possible that the Shakari dialect was originally the language of the Shakas but later spread to a considerable part and instead of being confined to the Shakas only became the speech of some lower class of people in the society. Markandeya deals with the characteristics of Shakari as one of the five *vibhashas*.¹⁰

Chandali is the dialect used by the executioners (*chandalas*) in Shudraka's play. Evidently a spoken dialect of the people of the lowest strata of the society the Chandali shows signs of being a mixed dialect having both Shauraseni and Magadhi features in it.¹¹ It is also known as a corrupt form of Magadhi. Though we are not told about the class of the people who should use this dialect the rules as laid down in the grammars conform to the features of the speech of the *Chandalas* in Shudraka.¹² It is preeminently a dialect of Magadhi domination and from the nominative, genitive and ablative endings its Shauraseni features become obvious. A caste-dialect by nature the Chandali must have originated from the Magadhi as will be borne out by the use of *l*, *s* and *y* before the palatal. The group of people with this tongue living in a low society perhaps mixed with people speaking a better or cultured dialect like Shauraseni and in course of time got influenced by some features of the latter which are noticeable in the dialect: The *chandalas* in the *Balacharita* of Bhasa use Magadhi and it perhaps 'indicates that in ancient times *Chandalas* spoke Magadhi which later on acquired some peculiarities (of its own) with the result that the so-called Chandali came to be known as the language of *Chandalas*.'¹³

Prithvidhara names Dhakki as the speech used by the gamblers in Shudraka's drama. The correct name of the dialect should be Takki dealt with by Prakrit grammarians as the language of the Takka country and as spoken by gamblers, knaves and merchants.¹⁴ Mixture of Sanskrit and Shauraseni the Takki-dialect is said to have gained

10. *Prakritasarvasvam*, Chapter xiii

11. *Ibid*

12. *Ibid*

13. K. C. Acharya, *Prakritasarvasvam* Intro. p. 89

14. *Prakritasarvasvam*, Chapter xvi

popularity in South India owing to its rich Sanskritised vocabulary, as also for its Apabhramsha-like nature.¹⁵ The *u*-termination in the nominative singular in the dialect is similar to that of South Indian languages. The Takka country was in Western India where Apabhramsha had also originated and the preponderance of the *u*-vowel makes the dialect akin to Apabhramsha. Through the agency of their respective speakers both Takki and Apabhramsha passed on to South India. An examination of the peculiarities of the dialect as we find in the treatment of Prakrit grammarians the Takki is a degraded form of Sanskrit and Shauraseni with Apabhramsha domination.

From the foregoing discussion it will appear that the seven kinds of Prakrits and dialects said to have formed the rich variety of Prakrits in Shudraka practically reduce themselves to three, viz., Shauraseni, Magadhi and Takki.

15. *loc. cit*

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